

Special Children

Meeting children's additional educational needs

- * ITT and SEND
- * Autism and resilience
- * Diabetes: planning and support
- * Child-centred personalisation
- * Ofsted: how to be 'outstanding'

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Creativity and achievement

One of the many criticisms levelled at the new national curriculum for England is the lack of importance it accords to creativity and the arts. In contrast, the Welsh government has declared its intention to act on the findings of a new, in-depth report that confirms the power of the arts to improve learning across the board.

So we make no apology for devoting three articles to the creative arts in this edition. Our cover story (pages 12-15) features a multi-sensory approach to art that allows everyone to shine, irrespective of age or ability. Meanwhile a project designed to improve music provision for young people with SEND is having a big impact in Southend-on-Sea (pages 8-10), while Talking Point (page 52) looks at a free online music assessment tool and resource.

A contradiction in terms

One of the strange things about the new national curriculum is the way it seems at odds with the Ofsted criteria that refer to the motivation, engagement, creativity, independence and autonomy of learners. These were key characteristics of an outstanding primary school we profiled in our last issue. This edition picks up the story by looking at an outstanding secondary school whose innovative curriculum also has creativity at its heart. See pages 29-31.

On a slightly different note, a new study from the London School of Economics' Centre for Economic Performance has concluded that the perception of being less successful than more able classmates damages a child's self-confidence and hence their potential to achieve.

This will come as no surprise to most teachers, but what is the solution? One of the features of the Developmental Journals created by Early Support (pages 22-23) is a major focus on what children *can* do rather than what they can't. Meanwhile on pages 20-21 Barbara Ball explores how developing teachers' emotional intelligence helps them to understand the whole child to develop a more personalised approach.

New hope for diabetics

Diabetes is rarely out of the news, but for once it is for a positive reason. A preliminary trial by US scientists of a drug used for the

autoimmune disorder psoriasis suggests that it might be able to stabilise type 1 diabetes and halt its progression. While not claiming to have found a cure, lead researcher Professor Mark Rigby of Indiana University is cautiously optimistic about the early results. For now, however, diabetes remains a life-threatening condition and schools need a robust strategy to ensure pupils with the condition are not disadvantaged. See pages 16-18.

Awareness and understanding

Slowly the UK is becoming more SEND aware. For instance, Cineworld, Odeon and Vue cinemas now offer monthly autism-friendly screenings which promise low lighting, turned-down volume, no trailers, permission to bring your own snacks and the freedom to move around (within sensible limits). Worth mentioning to parents if they don't already know. bit.ly/sc215-21

On the subject of autism, Zoe Thompson believes that children on the spectrum can be supported to enjoy deep, emotional relationships and develop resilience if we address their core difficulties at source. Find out how on pages 36-38.

Meanwhile a forward-thinking partnership between a special school and a university (pages 40-42) allows ITT students to deepen their understanding of all types of SEND by gaining first-hand experience of working special schools.

And finally

What is our vision for education in the future? That is the massive question posed by the Great Educational Debate launched by the Association of School and College Leaders in September. Amongst the early contributions, an article by Dr Andreas Schleicher of the OECD argues that 'The past was about delivered wisdom, the future is about user-generated wisdom... the past was curriculum-centred, the future is learner-centred.'

Is this in keeping with the ethos of the new National Curriculum? To read other contributions and have your own say, visit www.greateducationdebate.org.uk

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Cover picture:
Paint squirts from the tube as a child discovers the joy of multi-sensory painting

Helping deaf students with SEND

'When a child has complex needs, their hearing problems may go unrecognised or undiagnosed. This may be because behaviours associated with deafness are thought of as being part of the child's personality, physical or learning difficulties, or complex needs,' begins *Supporting the achievement of hearing impaired children in special schools*.

This new publication from the National Deaf Children's Society helps practitioners recognise when there might be an auditory problem and then give the right support. It is full of insight, useful case studies that illustrate key issues, and advice for creating a better learning



A deaf girl with complex needs is supported in the classroom with several methods of communication

environment for deaf children and young people who have other significant needs. www.ndcs.org.uk/specialschools

Chatterbox Challenge

Being a good communicator is the most important skill a child can learn because it is crucial for socialising, understanding and expressing emotions or feelings, and learning and reading.

I CAN, the children's communication charity, has launched *Sounds like fun with Humf*, its 13th annual Chatterbox Challenge. This sing-along encourages under-fives to develop their communication skills through rhymes and songs and raise money towards I CAN's work with children who have speech, language and communication needs.

Most events will be held in the week commencing 10 February 2014.



Humf explores the world of song in the Chatterbox Challenge with his friends

Schools can register now at www.chatterboxchallenge.org.uk and receive a free fundraising pack.

Accessing support

It is a sad fact that nothing much has changed since *Ambitious About Autism* released its 2012 Schools Report.

In fact, some aspects have got worse: the 2013 report shows that the number of pupils with autism achieving five A*-C GCSEs including maths and English has gone down 0.6 per cent.

What's more, in a survey by NASUWT, 60 per cent of teachers in England said they feel they lack the training they need to teach children with autism, and 35 per cent said it has become harder to access specialist support. Meanwhile, the number of children with a statement of SEN for autism has risen 6.5 per cent to

47,225 since last year.

Clare Bull, policy and public affairs officer at *Ambitious About Autism*, says: 'It is a serious concern that teachers are finding it harder to get specialist support for children with autism now than a year ago. This is a step backwards and we need to look hard at why this is happening, when the Government wants to improve the support young people with special educational needs get through the Children and Families Bill. Given that 71 per cent of children with autism are educated in mainstream schools, providing teachers with the correct training to support pupils with autism is vital.'

University calls

When several deaf students contacted the Deaf Education Advocacy Fellowship (DEAF) asking for help with their university applications, the outcome was very positive – a series of signed videos is now posted on relevant pages of the UCAS website.

Using British Sign Language, the videos guide students through the application process and explain where they can get support before and during their time at university.

Meanwhile UCAS is also working with RNIB to improve online accessibility for visually impaired students.

Monster readers

Everyone knows that children prefer play to work, which is why Usborne Foundation's free sequel to the award-winning online game *Teach Your Monster to Read: First Steps* is most welcome.

Designed to inspire children to play their way to reading skills, *Teach Your Monster to Read 2: Fun With Words* takes players who have completed the first game on a new adventure, where they design their own monster and help him navigate his way through word games to rescue his spacecraft.

Using the synthetic phonics approach, the game introduces new graphemes, phonemes and tricky words, offers plenty of blending and segmenting practice, and includes the comprehension of simple sentences and captions. Use of headphones recommended.

bit.ly/sc215-23



Children collect points to 'buy' clothes and accessories for their monster



Last year's Anti Bullying Week competition winning entry from Kishen Patel, aged 10, from Virgo Fidelis School

Anti Bullying Week

The theme for Actionwork's Anti Bullying Week, which takes place between 18 and 22 November, is *The Future is Ours. Safe, Fun and Connected.*

Actionwork, which promotes understanding of youth conflict and violence, and teaches people to handle and transform violence in schools and the community, is running a 60-minute roadshow throughout November. The roadshow can be performed to whole year groups at a time, and every school that books will be given an anti-bullying lesson plan to help teachers follow up the visit. Actionwork is also running workshops for students as well as Inset training for staff.

Meanwhile, Groupcall is sponsoring a competition to encourage students to show how they can connect and communicate safely online. Entry is free and students can demonstrate their idea in a way that suits them, which could include a photo, a painting, a story or a gadget they have designed. The first prize is £300, the closing date is 15 December. www.antibullyingweek.co.uk

Groupcall has also launched BATline (Bully Action Team), making it easy for pupils or parents to report bullying incidents anonymously to the relevant person at their school. Schools are provided with a dedicated incoming text number, and can choose to receive the mobile phone number that the text was sent from. bit.ly/sc215-11

Myth busting

Mumsnet is running a campaign to expose some of the myths and unhelpful assumptions surrounding parenting children with special needs.

Together with its campaign partners, Every Disabled Child Matters, Contact A Family and Mencap, and with help from the National Autistic Society, Mumsnet has come up with six common myths that

need debunking, including:

- behaviour disorders are a fashionable excuse for bad behaviour and poor parenting
- you can always tell when someone has a disability.

The campaign website offers strategies and resources for parents and a forum to share their concerns. bit.ly/sc215-12

Safer Internet access

In theory, you have to be 13 years old to be on Facebook, although an estimated 7.5 million users are under that age. Now there is a safe alternative for these youngsters: www.smileytalk.com. The basic version is free; the upgraded version costs £5 a year.

Children chat using extensive lists of pre-defined questions and answers so

there are no text or language barriers and no grooming or bullying is possible. And because no keyboard is required, it is accessible to children with disabilities. Although users can put photos up on their scrapbooks, nothing is actually posted until a CRB-checked moderator has approved it.

Meanwhile, if language teachers want a little extra paid work, SmileyTalk is looking for translators.

Helping homeless children

80,000 children will be homeless this Christmas, according to Shelter, the housing and homelessness charity. To support its Christmas appeal, it has launched the Great Gingerbread House Sale to encourage pupils to design, bake, build and then sell their gingerbread creations.

Shelter has provided recipes and templates and created some gingerbreadly lesson plans (EYFS through to Key Stage 4) to explain the importance of a stable home in people's lives and Shelter's role in this. www.shelter.org.uk/gingerbread



Money raised from the sale of gingerbread houses will go towards helping homeless children this Christmas

SEND reform comes nearer

SEND Pathfinder has produced introductory information packs that explain the emerging principles and key discoveries from the pathfinder areas. bit.ly/sc215-25. They provide support for other areas to help them prepare for what lies ahead and contain information on:

- 0-25 co-ordinated assessment and education, health, and care plans
- SEN personal budgets
- the Local Offer
- engagement and participation of

children, young people, parents and carers

- joint commissioning
- preparing for adulthood.

Meanwhile, the draft SEN Code of Practice has also been published, together with draft regulations and transitional arrangements. Clarity is beginning to emerge, but this is still a consultation document and you have until 9 December to make your voices heard. The government's response will be published in spring 2014. bit.ly/sc215-24

Friends, Romans, countrymen...

... lend me your ears. **Shakespeare Week, which takes place 17-23 March 2014, is a national celebration marking the 450th anniversary of the playwright's birth. The goal is to make his work accessible to every primary school child in the country.**

1,000 primary schools have already registered to take part in the campaign and there are many ways to get involved. For instance, the Shakespeare Passport offers schools, children and their families access to special events and incentives organised by local and national arts and heritage venues around the UK. And teachers across the curriculum can benefit

from a bank of resources. While most of these are aimed at nine- to 11-year-olds, many can be quickly adapted for younger children. www.shakespeareweek.org.uk



Pupils taking part in a 'Tudors Alive!' educational session

Change at nasen

Lorraine Petersen is stepping down as CEO of nasen, formerly the National Association of Special Educational Needs.

Much admired and respected, Mrs Petersen has worked in mainstream and specialist settings for many years. She joined nasen as a volunteer in 1995 and became CEO in 2004. In 2009, she was awarded an OBE for services to education.

Mrs Petersen received the Outstanding Achievement award at BETT 2013, for her 'incomparable career in education'. The judges said: 'We looked carefully at the history of nasen and particularly at how the association has developed since Mrs Petersen became its CEO a decade ago. Formerly a teacher and a Senco herself, there was strong evidence that Mrs Petersen was always more than an enthusiast for enriching

the lives of children, no matter what their difficulties, and that her many abilities, as well as her passion, were carried into the development of nasen and its services. Always with time for anyone or any group seeking help, always cheerful in the face of difficulties, always positive for the future and what nasen and its members can achieve, Mrs Petersen is a much loved figure: within the industry, within education and within government circles.'

Stephen Bajdala-Brown, chair of trustees at nasen, said: 'It is with no small measure of regret that we announce that Lorraine Petersen will be stepping down as CEO of nasen. Her commitment to the organisation, and to all those it supports, has been tireless and inspirational and she will leave an incredibly positive and lasting impact. We wish her the very best for the future.'

Busy feet

The health time bomb is ticking according to Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke.

Research by the University College of London showed that only 43 per cent of seven-year-olds in Northern Ireland were getting the recommended one hour a day of exercise. Chief Executive Andrew Dougal says that the findings are particularly worrying because children tend to become less rather than more active as they become older.

So it is serendipitous that a second edition of the Busy Feet toolkit has been



Children aren't getting enough exercise

launched, which will help EYFS teachers promote a more active lifestyle. The resources include lots of action songs as well as session plans and printable resources. bit.ly/sc215-09

I wish

Pupils throughout Great Britain are being offered the chance to come up with inspiring ideas to improve their school. The prize is £5,000 for the winning school in each category – primary, secondary and special – to implement their idea(s).

The competition, organised by Zurich Municipal and *The Guardian* Teacher Network, sets out to encourage students and teachers to work together and develop ideas to improve the quality of their school experience. Last year's winners were as follows.

- Horniman Primary School, Forest Hill, London, is now using electricity-producing bikes to reduce the school's energy bill.
- Ifield Foundation Special School, Kent, converted a wasteland into a workshop and wildlife area.
- Salendine Nook High School, Huddersfield, revamped a rundown walkway with a graffiti mural.

The closing date for entries is 29th November. bit.ly/sc215-18

Contact improves attitudes

Negative attitudes and discrimination are experienced by most disabled people on a regular basis. New research confirms that children develop better attitudes towards people with disabilities if they are in daily contact with them.

Megan MacMillan, a PhD student from the University of Exeter Medical School, presented her findings at a conference of the British Psychological Society. She surveyed 1,520 pupils aged seven to 16 from mainstream schools to measure their attitudes, contact, empathy and anxiety towards disabled people.

She says: 'We have known for some time that integrating children with disabilities into the regular classroom can improve attitudes. What we have established is just how much difference a greater presence in day-to-day life can make.'

And it works both ways. 'Improving attitudes can have long lasting-effects and can help children with disabilities to succeed,' she comments. bit.ly/sc215-17

ADHD – an over-reliance on medication?

Following the Care Quality Commission's recording of yet another rise in annual prescriptions for methylphenidate, used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), experts are beginning to question whether there is an over-reliance on medication alone to 'fix' the condition.

Dr Carrie Ruxton, an expert in child nutrition, says: 'While more than 70 per cent of children with ADHD are believed to respond to medical intervention, reviews of the latest scientific evidence indicate that Omega-3 and -6 fatty acid supplementation may offer some behavioural and educational benefits to children with ADHD by impacting

positively on cognition, behaviour and learning.'

She continues: 'Emerging findings also indicate that these fatty acids are a good option as an adjunct to methylphenidate and may help to improve ADHD symptoms while actually lowering the side effects of the drug.'

'While many children do not eat fish, fish oil supplements are a particularly useful alternative either as an adjunct to traditional medical interventions or for families who prefer non-drug treatment for their children.'

'For suspected ADHD, there is no harm in parents starting Omega-3 supplementation while awaiting diagnosis as there may be a benefit, although they

should always speak to their family doctor before giving supplements to their child with ADHD, particularly if medication is being prescribed.'

Andrea Bilbow, chair of The National Attention Deficit Information & Support Service comments: 'At roughly 10 per cent per year over the last six years, the increase in prescribing for ADHD would be in line with what we would expect for a condition that continues into adulthood. I wish the same increase would be applied to the number of parents being offered psychoeducational and behaviour management courses. Importantly schools need to ensure teachers are well trained so that they can give children the support they need.'

A walk on the wild side

38 pupils from a Stockport primary school were the first to try out a new pilot programme of outdoor learning launched by the team behind The Sill, a huge £10.5 million new initiative in Northumberland National Park.

The pupils tried several activities including pond dipping to discover mini-beasts, exploring riverside habitats, orienteering, and uncovering the legends and mysteries of Thirlwall Castle.

Pam Koutsouvelis, Year 5 teacher at

Norris Bank, says: 'We could not have asked for a better range of activities. The whole day was very well organised and child friendly – a delightful, fascinating and exciting experience. The children particularly enjoyed the pond dipping and were absolutely enthralled.'

For more information about The Sill, visit www.thesill.org.uk



Pupils from Norris Bank Primary School take part in special outdoor activities

And finally...

Adapting your language

Specific language impairment (SLI) commonly co-occurs with other conditions including dyslexia, ADHD and developmental coordination disorder. A new video from RALLI (Raise Awareness of Language Learning Impairments) called *Adapting Your Language* provides teachers with tips on how to help children and young people with SLI to learn in the classroom. bit.ly/sc215-04

ICT and the Senco

A one-day conference, *Special Educational Needs and ICT – CPD for Primary Sencos*, takes place on both 7 and 21 November in London.

Sponsored by Crick Software, speakers

include the former Senco and Ofsted inspector Dr Linda Evans, who will speak on investing in technology using the Pupil Premium; Carol Allen, a school improvement advisor, on learning using iPads; and Helen Caldwell, senior lecturer in ITT at Northampton University, on using technology to support struggling or reluctant writers. bit.ly/sc215-13

Technology information days

Inclusive Technology is running a series of information days around the country looking at ICT for children with special needs.

There are two themes. The first day, entitled *Communication and learning through technology*, focuses on the

learning and leisure needs of children and young people with severe and complex special needs.

The second day is split into two. The morning sessions are devoted to iPads, apps for children with special needs, and switch interfaces.

The afternoon looks at eye gaze technology: assessment and using this technology for communication, learning and leisure.

bit.ly/sc215-22

iPad guitars?

You've heard of air guitars. Now you can turn an iPad into a strummable instrument with ZAP Guitar, a free app from instruMusic. bit.ly/sc215-14

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Pupils are encouraged to explore new instruments and sounds

Music for all

Alison Thomas reports on an ambitious new initiative to improve and expand specialist music provision for children with SEND

It's Saturday morning in Southend-on-Sea and students at the Mencap Music School are singing their hearts out. At the piano, musical director David Stanley provides the accompaniment, backed by some of the singers on tambourine, glockenspiel and triangle.

The action moves on, and two young people are dancing together, swinging their hips in time to the music. 'I like performing,' says Annette. 'I like seeing all my friends and I like seeing my boyfriend. [Coming here] has given me more confidence, I might come on my own one day. It feels like I've been loved.'

Her sentiments are echoed by Sam, who is on the autism spectrum and has frequent mood swings.

'If I'm with people at the Music School, I'm all happy-dabby-ding!' she laughs. 'But if I'm somewhere else, at home or something, it's true, I'm not so happy. I love it so much, I just want it to keep going otherwise I would be really upset. I wouldn't know what to do.'

Later we see them all performing at a Christmas concert, where Sam gives a beautiful rendering of Edelweiss, and Jenny, one of the school's older members, surprises everyone by stepping forward from the audience to sing a solo, although

she hasn't been well. 'That was my special day,' she confides afterwards. 'I couldn't believe how much I was able to use my voice. Joining in with all my friends at Music School is the most important thing in my life.'

“ **Music develops self-esteem, social skills, communication and emotional control** ”

Inclusion through differentiation

These cameos are from a moving documentary which captures the joy, camaraderie and shared sense of achievement that are the hallmarks of the school. Founded by Mr Stanley in 2001, the school meets every Saturday, but its impact has been so profound Mr Stanley has relinquished his post as a secondary school deputy headteacher to launch a full-time programme on behalf of Southend Mencap.

Called the Music Man Project, the new venture has been running for just over a year, but already it is reaching

hundreds of children and adults with learning disabilities in the local area and continues to grow. Equally importantly, it is providing consultancy, teacher training and free online resources to schools, colleges and care providers.

For Mr Stanley's ultimate goal is to create a sustainable model that could be replicated in other towns across the UK.

'Learning to make music is immensely worthwhile for its own sake, with all the knock-on benefits of developing self-esteem, social skills, communication and emotional control,' he says. 'These are, of course, the same benefits that I received as a budding young pianist. The only difference for learners with special needs is that it may take them longer and will typically require greater inclusion through differentiation. Through the Music Man Project I want to share my expertise so that everyone can reap the same rewards.'

Unlocking potential

He describes his approach as education rather than therapy, and uses his expertise and experience as a classically trained musician to bring out students' innate inner musicality and prepare them for live performance.

'Music is so instinctive, natural and accessible that even people with the most

complex needs can achieve enormous success,' he explains. 'For example, one of the children I am working with at the moment has very limited movement in his arms. When I asked him to strike a cymbal, he was able to do it after some delay. I then played the piano along with him, stopping at predictable moments in the music. Before long he was playing his cymbal in the gaps without instruction or assistance, because of his musical instinct. We were making music together, communicating through music, and soon performed our piece to parents in a school concert.'

An affordable model

Supported by a volunteer team of musicians and helpers, Mr Stanley delivers his lessons at church halls and community centres to keep overheads down. Staffing and resources are also subsidised by his work in schools and colleges, which outsource their music provision to the project. Add to this the cascade effect of his consultancy services and teacher training, and the partnerships he has established with local government agencies, and the result is a formula that he says costs less to the end user than most services currently offered by education and care providers.

'Lifelong learning is crucial,' he maintains. 'The combination of care and education which begins in special schools must continue into adulthood. The Music Man Project has demonstrated how this can be achieved affordably through music.'



The joy of intensive interaction through musical communication

Music hub for special schools

One of the most significant aspects of the project is its work in special schools, and Mr Stanley's very first initiative was to establish a music hub at Kingsdown Special School, which serves the school's own pupils and children from special schools in the surrounding community.

'The value of music in special needs education has long been recognised, but the opportunity to maximise the benefits across the whole school is beyond the staffing and resource base of many headteachers,' he explains. 'The Music Man Project is focused on enabling schools to develop the power and reach of music further, so that it can substantially

enhance pupil progress, pupil and teacher motivation and staff development. Not to mention the contribution it can make to meeting the requirements of the new Ofsted framework.'

The services the project provides include staff training and senior management support, in-class and one-to-one teaching, extra-curricular activities, performances by visiting musicians and preparing the children to perform in public themselves. Kingsdown School also benefits from bespoke compositions designed to develop basic skills and reinforce the curriculum, and a wide range of resources, that are trialled and developed here before being offered to other institutions.

Headteacher Margaret Rimmer shares Mr Stanley's belief in the potential of music to drive teaching and learning and wants Kingsdown to become a specialist centre of excellence which features music in every lesson.

That has already begun to happen, and visitors to the school are greeted by the sound of musical themes for each class and the joyful singing of songs to help pupils understand basic concepts such as the days of the week and the weather.

Supporting teaching and learning

An important feature of the project is a free handbook containing information and advice to support teaching and learning. At its core are 12 achievement levels, comprising a series of objectives ranging from 'hit a drum' to 'improvise on a glockenspiel using the pentatonic scale.'

Developed over a decade at the Mencap Music School, these take the

Achievement levels

Glockenspiel

a) Starting to play

I can:

1. hit any note with a beater
2. hit specific notes with assistance
3. hit specific notes without assistance
4. play all the notes consecutively starting at the bottom
5. play a C major scale with assistance
6. play a C major scale without assistance
7. play a D major scale with assistance
8. play a D major scale without assistance.

b) Playing a series of notes from memory

I can:

1. play a simple passage of notes with assistance (pointing)
2. play a simple passage of notes with assistance (verbal instructions)
3. play a simple passage of notes without assistance following letter names
4. play a series of notes without assistance



from memory

5. play a series of notes from memory in time with the music.

c) Improvising using the pentatonic scale

I can:

1. find the notes of a pentatonic scale
2. play the notes of a pentatonic scale accurately
3. explain or demonstrate the meaning of the term pentatonic
4. improvise using a pentatonic scale
5. improvise using a pentatonic scale along with other players
6. improvise with a sense of style and variation
7. improvise with an awareness of home key.

Adapted from the Music Man Project Handbook



Using the ukulele to develop concentration and focus

learner and teacher through a series of small, incremental steps, give structure to the teaching, reward progress and provide accountability and evidence for stakeholders. For students working at the very early stages, a set of micro levels allows them to experience success, while the more advanced levels enable learners with natural flair to progress beyond the standard of their class as a whole.

‘Differentiation is key,’ says Mr Stanley. ‘All too often, lessons in schools comprise a series of banal activities suited to the least able instead of offering exciting opportunities for everyone to become more accomplished – an approach that can lead to the discovery of real talent.’

‘One of the first things I do during teacher training sessions is to show people how to achieve the levels. This is great fun once everyone has overcome their inhibitions and fear of failure! The aim of the project is to give musicians and non-musical teachers the skills to teach music in the special needs sector, and we are actively seeking people who would be willing to try.’

Sustainability

The impact of the Kingsdown School music hub has encouraged demand from other special schools, and Mr Stanley has formed a delivery partnership with Southend Music Education Hub to provide more schools with training and support at a subsidised rate, including a school for children with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.

In the longer term, his plan is to continue to develop the scope and reach of the project so that individuals

“ **People with the most complex needs can achieve enormous success** ”

and organisations around the country can feel more confident incorporating music education for people with special needs. Since the documentary was released online, he has already received expressions of interest from teachers around the UK, as well as from destinations much further afield, including Australia and Hawaii.

One of the most important steps forward will be to gain national accreditation and he is currently in discussion with Trinity College London with a view to making the Music Man Project an accredited delivery centre for its Arts Award qualification. ‘Our achievement levels together with the emphasis on creativity, communication and performance fit well with the scheme. It would be a wonderful way of bringing music to the forefront of special education,’ he says.

In the meantime, Southend Mencap is well on its way to achieving its goal of running the Music Man Project as an entirely self-sustaining operation. For his part, Mr Stanley is looking forward to fulfilling a long-standing ambition – one of his many targets for 2015 is to see the hundreds of students he teaches performing at the Royal Albert Hall.

Given his drive and determination, the prospects look good.

Differentiation

Teaching and learning

Teaching strategies instigate a number of different responses depending on the type and complexity of the individual learner’s needs. This will range from purely experiential learning to leading the group, performing solos and helping others. The achievement levels and micro levels represent many differentiated outcomes and each learner is regularly set individual targets based on their own progress and attainment.

Music is a highly effective method for delivering differentiated learning because a number of different skills and ability ranges combine to produce a single performance. For example, a keyboard piece can be performed with one hand, two hands, slow or fast, with only the correct pitch, with and without a backing beat and as a solo or within an ensemble. The possibilities for simplifying or complicating musical elements are infinite.

This is particularly useful in a group context as a learner with restricted movement can still play the all-important cymbal clash at the end of a more complicated performance and thereby have a vital role in the musical ensemble.

Measuring outcomes

Assessment in this context does not mean a test, class quiz or the marking of solo performances. Instead, the teacher, learning support assistant, carer or volunteer simply notes down the success against the relevant Music Man achievement level.

The objective is to capture the learner demonstrating the skill, and in some instances this may even be a demonstration of their intention to demonstrate the skill. This is particularly important for learners who may not be able to consistently achieve something due to external factors, poor memory or physical incapability. As long as their action demonstrates their understanding of what is being studied at the given moment, then this is a sign of progress and should be rewarded.

Assessment is therefore highly flexible and learners can show their understanding in ways which suit their abilities. However, the process remains an exercise in assessment because the levels are challenging, they are linked directly to learning and they inform the setting of targets.

Although ideally an on-going process, for the sake of practicality it is advised that formal, documented assessment should occur once every half term.

Find out more

The Music Man Project: watch the documentary, download the handbook and access abundant free resources, including lyrics, sheet music, backing tracks and demonstrations.
<http://themusicmanproject.co.uk/>

Southend Mencap: www.southendmencap.org.uk

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Communicating through art

The multi-sensory approach of Connect 2 Colour unlocks creativity and allows everyone to shine. **Sally Webb** explains

Who created this dazzling display of swirling colours and interesting textures?

Was it:

- a. high-powered executives on a team-building exercise?
- b. a group of typical seven-year-olds?
- c. a young boy with Down syndrome and communication and learning difficulties?

The answer is c, but it could equally well have been either of the other two.

Since I founded Connect 2 Colour two years ago, I have worked with families spanning all generations. I have caused a stir at birthday parties and in boardrooms, and worked extensively with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Without exception, the results have been stunning. It is impossible to distinguish the work of a proficient artist

“ *One boy was mesmerised and whispered, ‘Rain,’ as the jewels fell* ”

from that of a complete novice or a child with severe, profound and complex needs.

Opening up communication

My passion for enabling people with SEND to connect with the wider world dates back to my childhood when I grew up with a younger brother who has severe learning difficulties, autism and self-injurious behaviour. Later my daughter was diagnosed with semantic pragmatic speech disorder and autism; then we discovered that my niece had cerebral palsy. The inspiration my family has given me, coupled with my experience as a special needs teacher, has

deepened my understanding of people with a diverse range of learning needs and their universal desire to be heard and understood.

The vision for Connect 2 Colour began to take shape when I was teaching children with autism at a special school for children with communication and learning difficulties. I wanted to develop a meaningful activity that would motivate them to engage in a positive, collaborative experience and leave a marker behind to be appreciated by others.

Art seemed the logical medium, but to be truly inclusive, there had to be no danger of failure, no right or wrong way to approach it. So I set out to design a step-by-step process that was purposeful, incorporated each child's occupational, physiotherapy and speech therapy targets and would culminate in a beautiful work of art – quite a tall order considering the widely differing needs of the pupils involved.

Getting started

The first time I tried out my approach, I used a very large canvas, so there was enough space for the children to spread out with an adult positioned between each one. We started by squirting acrylic paint onto the surface and smearing it all over with our hands. It was great to see the children's delight and hear their giggles whenever the paint made a 'farty' noise as it spurted out of the tube.

After washing our hands, we added wavy streaks of paint and glitter glues and began making patterns with up-ended brushes. The children found this strange at first but as more patterns began to emerge, they were hooked.

“As the children worked side by side, they began to relax and collaborate”

Laughter and communication occurred naturally as we discovered our creativity together. There was no pressure, no pre-determined outcome. I had collected some sequins and beads, and we took it in turns to throw a handful up into the air, then listened as they pattered down onto the wet paint. One boy was mesmerised and whispered, 'Rain,' as the jewels fell – just like multi-coloured raindrops.

The finished painting was magnificent and the idea of Connect 2 Colour was born.

Cross-curricular benefits

I had found a way for us to communicate, take turns, use fine and gross motor skills and have lots of fun in the process. I was then able to build in the children's

I CAN workshop Bishopsgate School, Surrey



Tips for the classroom

If you think about art on a textural, not just a purely visual level, learning becomes richer and more meaningful. What better way to include visually impaired children, who can explore what they have created with their fingers? Add another dimension by drizzling essential oils onto tissues or cotton wool and attach them to the back of the canvases, so the children can smell as well as touch.

It's about communication, breaking down barriers and enabling. It's exciting for pupils and staff alike as they experiment, discover new things and develop their creativity together.

Feely canvas wall

Buttons, beads, even small plastic toys sunk into thick acrylic paint will look fabulous on the finished artwork. Try taking six small square canvases and asking the children to paint each one a different colour. Then get them to add their embellishments and repaint each canvas in the same colour as before, adding a final flourish by sprinkling it with glitter and sequins.

Hang the finished paintings in a block at a height the children can reach. You now have a great classroom resource for teaching colour (show me the blue square, red square) texture and form, and the children will love the sensory feedback they get through their fingertips on the glittery surfaces.

Texture, colour and fine motor skills

Ask the children to drizzle a blank canvas with different coloured acrylic paints or glitter glues, then spread it all over with their fingers. This provides the background for strips of coloured

therapy targets by introducing different implements and giving each member of staff a set of skills to work towards, tied into each child's individual goals.

To support the children's social skills, I reduced the size of the canvas, and because they were so motivated, they were able to tolerate standing much closer together. I then gave them the option of

tissue paper and embellishments such as beads (recycle old and broken jewellery) stuck on with PVA glue. Let the children choose their adornments from a tray of objects including items of different shapes and sizes, so they have to take hold of them in different ways. Stand back and admire a colourful landscape that is beautiful to look at and provides textural feedback.

Textured flags

To create a St George's flag, get the children to paint a red cross on a rectangular white canvas, using masking tape for a clean finish. Then ask them to fill each corner with objects of contrasting textures, painted white if necessary. Suitable inexpensive items might include rice, pasta, cotton wool, sponges, tissue paper and sand paper. Once again the finished artwork provides a handy classroom resource for everyday reference, as you can ask the children to show you something soft, hard, rough, smooth, crinkly, fluffy... extending their vocabulary as well as their appreciation of texture.

Personalised initials

Decorating children's names or initials is great for early literacy skills. Letters made of wood or papier mâché are available from most craft stores and can be decorated to reflect the choices and personality of each individual. Once painted, they can be adorned with beads or other small items and mounted onto canvas with PVA glue. Adding photos of the child's family, pets or interests is another way of making the results really personal.

working together as a group or engaging one to one with a member of staff to focus on a particular target. As they experimented with the new implements in the paint, their handwriting began to improve too.

I built our 'sensory painting' into the curriculum as a way of providing additional quality time with groups and individuals. The children clearly benefited, not just physically and socially, but from the massive boost to their self-esteem as their work drew admiring comments from around the school.

Children from other classes were soon clamouring to join us and when we invited in the first group, a remarkable thing happened – my pupils with autism were able to take the lead. Because I had devised the process as a series of steps, they knew exactly what to do and could demonstrate it to others, providing a bridge to communication.

The joy of teamwork

One of the children who joined us that day was very wary of getting paint on his hands, so he became my assistant, passing



Jake creating the beautiful picture on page 12. He focused intently throughout the entire two-hour workshop, to the amazement of his mum and headteacher

tubes of paint and items to the artists. It wasn't long before he wanted to try it for himself and tentatively began to take part. A few moments later he turned to me with a broad grin and held out two hands covered in bright blue paint. He had overcome his anxiety, connected with the group and his delight was there for all to see.

He wasn't alone. As the children worked side by side, with prompting and

encouragement from staff they began to relax and collaborate; they took turns, smiled at each other and exchanged small comments about their work. It was a real breakthrough.

When the painting was finished, we presented an assembly to the rest of the school about teamwork. There was lots of applause as the artwork was unveiled, and afterwards it was put on display in the dining hall. Two days later I was having

“ *They approach the blank canvas with a joint sense of anticipation* ”

lunch with one of my pupils. ‘Lovely painting, who did it?’ I asked. Beaming all over, she replied, ‘Me!’ She had every right to be proud.

Reversing normal roles

It was when I started to run community workshops in the school holidays that I discovered just how inclusive my approach was. When children with SEND brought their siblings along, it was impossible to tell their pictures apart.

I also had confirmation that the step-by-step process empowered children with autism to instruct their typically developing peers. A moving example was Tom, a boy from my class with autism and severe learning difficulties, whose twin brother and sister attended a session with him to paint a Father's Day present for their dad.

The three children chose their colours and the twins watched as Tom squirted paint onto the bare canvas and began to rub it in with his fingers. ‘What next Tom?’ I asked, to which he replied, ‘Blue.’ His brother Toby had the blue paint and copied what Tom had done, then his sister followed suit with yellow. This pattern continued throughout the session, with Tom leading each stage of the activity.

When their mother arrived to pick them up, Toby could hardly contain

Supporting curricular targets

I CAN is a new half-day workshop for children from key stages 1 to 3 in mainstream schools. Piloted over the past 18 months in primary schools, the aim is to encourage pupils to support each other to reach their national curriculum targets. It is also designed to give a voice to children who aren't usually heard.

The Connect 2 Colour message flows throughout: whatever your age, social background, culture or abilities, you can't get it wrong. In many ways it brings the school ethos to life as staff and children learn new skills in a collaborative way, strengthening their relationships and learning to communicate more effectively.

Helping each other

It begins with a painting. The children learn the process first, then show their teachers what to do. Children with additional needs play an important

part in this by taking on small responsibilities as the work unfolds. This is quite a leveller and has a powerful effect on pupils and teachers alike.

When the painting is finished, each child identifies one thing they would like to do better – for example ‘I'd like to get better marks in maths’. This leads into the discussion phase, where we talk about the value of giving and brainstorm solutions. Who has an idea? Who's best at maths? How could they help? For ‘geeky’ children, it's an opportunity to gain respect, while children who lack faith in themselves get support from their more confident peers.

Once we have explored all the avenues we can think of, everyone writes their personal target around the border and we insert the words I CAN in big, bold, three-dimensional letters in the middle.

Personalised support

The approach pulls together the key principles of

the SEAL programme and Every Child Matters, but it goes deeper by reaching each child on an individual level. During our pilot study we found we were picking up on safeguarding issues that had escaped detection through conventional channels. What more eloquent cry for help could there be than ‘I want to be loved’, as one pupil wrote? During the preliminary painting process, the children have begun to feel safe and more at ease with each other, which gives them a platform of security to speak out about their challenges and worries.

This willingness to open up and seek help when it's needed then becomes a natural part of school ethos and behaviour. In the schools where we have worked, we have watched children's self-esteem grow before our very eyes. As they begin to gain confidence and lose their fear of making mistakes, they become readier to embrace new challenges together, as a team, with a resounding ‘I CAN!’



My twin nieces Emily and Briana were born at 27 weeks, leaving Emily with cerebral palsy and Briana with under-developed ear canals; both girls had eye surgery to correct their vision and have worked hard to overcome their learning challenges. They were two of the inspirations for Connect 2 Colour and have spent many happy hours painting and simultaneously strengthening their skill base

his excitement. 'It was great, Mum!' he exclaimed. 'And guess what – Tom taught us something!' On hearing this rare tribute from his brother, Tom bowed his head and smiled. For once, he had shared something he had learned at school with his siblings. Their normal roles had been reversed and he felt valued.

Branching out

As the popularity of these holiday sessions grew, I was faced with the difficult choice of continuing in a profession I loved or expanding the scope of my work in the community. The community won and Connect 2 Colour came into being two years ago. Since then I have developed and piloted 11 different workshops, all based around communication and sensory art, using textures, colour and lots of different embellishments.

It works across all age groups and all sectors of society. I have watched executives on team-building events

derive the same sense of self-esteem, empowerment and connection with one another as I have witnessed in classrooms around the country.

For children, it's like being in a



India discovering how to connect to colour

sweet shop with a vast array of sequins, beads and sparkly things to share on a wonderful creative journey with their peers. Meanwhile adults become children again, lose their inhibitions and have great fun, which strengthens their relationships and helps them address their work/life balance. Families who work together always say they have a closer bond afterwards and an exciting reminder of their shared experience to hang on the wall at home.

The excitement is palpable from the outset. Each painting is unique, so no one knows what to expect as they approach the blank canvas with a joint sense of anticipation. The bonding begins right there, even before the first splodge of paint spurts out of the tube...

The Connect 2 Colour team offers workshops nationwide. For more information, see www.connect2colour.com

Diabetics need to monitor their blood glucose levels regularly. Younger children may need help



Supporting children with diabetes

Cate Wood explains how to provide support and set up a plan for managing diabetes in school

Christie was nine when her behaviour changed. From being a sunny, happy girl she became lethargic, tearful and angry.

Her friends did not want to play with her and teachers asked her about her home life – had there been arguments, family illness or breakdown? Likewise, her mum questioned the teacher about bullying, friendships and difficulties with schoolwork.

Christie was constantly thirsty and frequently asked to visit the toilet during lesson time, which her class teacher saw as a work avoidance strategy. An appointment with the educational psychologist was booked. The results shocked everyone – she had type 1 diabetes. An insulin routine, although initially stressful, eventually returned her to her previous sunny disposition.

About diabetes

It is estimated that 2,000 children are diagnosed with diabetes each year in the UK. In addition, an increasing number of children are being diagnosed with type 2, which is linked to the rise in obesity, although this is still very rare (thought to be around 3 per cent of cases).

Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood because

the body is unable to use it properly. People with type 1 diabetes cannot produce insulin. No one knows exactly what causes it, but it has nothing to do with being overweight and isn't currently preventable. It usually affects children or young adults, starting suddenly and getting worse quickly. It is treated by daily insulin doses, taken either by injections or a pump, a healthy diet and regular physical activity.

People with type 2 diabetes (around 90 per cent of diabetic adults have type 2) don't produce enough insulin, or the insulin they produce doesn't function properly (known as insulin resistance). It is usually managed initially through changes to lifestyle and diet.

If not managed well, both types can lead to devastating complications – it is the leading cause of blindness in people of working age in the UK and is a major cause of lower limb amputation, kidney failure and stroke.

Emotional reactions

A type 1 diabetes diagnosis initially is likely to be emotionally difficult to deal with. The family needs time to come to terms with it and may be anxious about their child coping with blood tests and injections. It is important that parents

and children are able to discuss the situation with a key person in school and clear communication channels need to be put in place. Initially, parents may want to speak with someone every day for reassurance that their child is managing. Equally, school staff may be anxious about the child becoming ill in class.

It is important that schools have an inclusive attitude to children with diabetes, and work with the family and the local health authority's paediatric diabetes specialist nurse (PDSN) to develop an individual healthcare plan, which details what needs to be done, when and by whom, and is kept regularly updated.

Diabetes in practice

Jack was diagnosed in February 2012 with type 1 diabetes after presenting with a range of typical symptoms including rapid weight loss, needing to urinate frequently at night, extreme tiredness and extreme thirst.

He was 16. His mum describes him as moody and argumentative at this time, but says it was impossible to isolate how much of this was due to his age, how much to the fact that he was feeling ill, and how much was the emotional fallout of his diagnosis.

“Parents should not be expected to come in to do blood testing or administer insulin”

His school, Sunderland High, was ‘incredible’, she says, and rose to the occasion with care, concern and consideration. Jackie Robson, the Senco, describes how they dealt with his diagnosis. She stresses that it was important for Jack to feel supported and that everyone, not just Jack’s teachers, knew what to do in an emergency.

The head of year coordinated the information and staff were informed via the weekly briefing and an accompanying briefing note. This was reinforced at whole-school staff meetings and head of year meetings.

Clearly labelled insulin was made readily available and a place was identified where Jack felt comfortable carrying out blood tests and injections.

Jack’s mother was impressed that the school did not try to impose a support plan but worked with the family and health professionals to agree a strategy.

She said that the PDSN was very reassuring, and together they set up a package of support that successfully saw Jack through his GCSEs.

Managing school trips

In the early spring, Jack was due to go on a residential camping trip as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Gold certificate. He was concerned that he might not be able to go and his mother was nervous about him being away from home so soon after his diagnosis.

However, the school worked closely with the PDSN, who provided materials to enable Jack and his teacher to train the group that he was to walk and camp with. They talked about possible issues and what to do. Jack and his companions felt confident and his mother felt reassured – so much so that she is accepting that he will go to university next year. She feels that this early successful experience has prepared them both for the time when he will eventually leave home and live independently.

Managing diabetes in school

Managing type 1 diabetes is a balancing act: regular monitoring of blood glucose levels and multiple daily insulin doses. Many children with type 1 diabetes may

count the amount of carbohydrate they eat and drink to match with their insulin requirements. They may also need help administering their insulin and checking their blood glucose levels – parents should not be expected to come in to do either.

“Diabetes should not affect the life chances and aspirations of the individual”

Blood sugar levels are affected by physical activity, so PE staff must ensure blood testing is never skipped through lack of time, and also allow time for snacks during their lessons.

Emotional situations such as exams may also affect sugar levels. Blood levels should be tested beforehand and may need to be checked again during the exam. Children should be allowed to take testing equipment and snacks to treat low blood glucose levels into exams.

Hypos (see box) impact cognitive functions for an hour or two after they have been resolved, and may affect the young person’s ability to concentrate in a following exam. Additional time or a later start may be necessary.

Avoiding discrimination

Currently there is no statutory requirement specific to schools providing support to children with diabetes. However, under the Equality Act, education providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments. Since September 2012, these have included the provision of auxiliary aids and services (personal assistance). Failure to supply these is a form of discrimination.

The reasonable adjustments duty is anticipatory, so schools need to think in advance about what might be required and what adjustments must be made to prevent children with diabetes being placed at a substantial disadvantage, as Sunderland High did to ensure Jack’s inclusion on the Duke of Edinburgh camp.

Other risks

People with a long-term health condition are at increased risk of developing depression and anxiety at some stage in their lives. This may be particularly apparent during transition periods between schools and on to college. For teens, the real concern is peer pressure, which may lead to the young person

Key characteristics of diabetes

A child with diabetes may:

- be unusually thirsty
- need to go to the toilet more frequently
- feel constantly tired
- have blurred vision
- lose weight for no reason
- have cuts that are slow to heal.

Hyperglycemia

- Called a ‘hyper’, this is triggered by excessive amounts of glucose in the blood.

A child with a hyper may:

- be unusually thirsty
- need to go to the toilet more frequently
- be lethargic and have a headache
- have abdominal pain
- have nausea.

Reasons for a hyper include:

- missing an insulin dose, not taking enough or over treating a hypo
- eating too many sugary or starchy foods
- stress or infection.

Hypoglycemia

- Called a ‘hypo’, this is triggered when blood sugar levels fall as a result of too much insulin or too little food.

A child with a hypo may:

- look pale, be sweaty and feel shaky

- feel hungry
- feel tired and not be able to concentrate
- have a headache
- have blurred vision
- be tearful or irritable
- have an elevated heart rate
- be confused, lose consciousness or experience convulsions.

Reasons for a hypo include:

- taking too much insulin
- delayed or missed meal or snack
- being more active than usual (although this is unlikely in children)
- sometimes no obvious cause.

Treating a hypo:

- Refer to the child’s plan.
- Never leave the child alone or send them to get food or treatment. Always bring it to them.
- If possible, check their glucose level.
- Give them something sugary to eat or drink.
- Recheck their glucose level after ten minutes.
- If glucose levels have not returned to a normal level, repeat the sugary food/drink.
- Some children may require a small snack once their glucose level has returned to normal, such as a piece of fruit, biscuit or similar.
- A serious hypo requires immediate medical attention.



A place needs to be identified where children will feel comfortable carrying out blood tests and injections

denying or not taking responsibility for their illness. The temptation to drink alcohol and eat junk food, both of which affect glucose levels, will be high. Any concerns about changes in behaviour should be addressed.

At college there is a fine line between independence and the need for continuing support, so it is important that schools pass on medical information. On moving

to a sixth form college, one boy became anxious that his new friends would think him a 'junkie'. As the college did not have a support plan for young people with long-term medical conditions, he was not monitored and his decision not to inject on the premises led to a hyper.

Jack knows just how he felt. He too worried about other people's opinions when he went to college, but felt happier

“ Jack worried about other people's opinions when he went to college ”

when he met up with a girl who also had the condition, and they were able to support each other.

Bullying may be a concern for some children and young people – especially those with type 2 diabetes, who may be overweight and dealing with issues around that. In the case of type 1 diabetes, bullying is usually based on the false assumption that the child used to eat too many sweets or has had problems controlling their weight.

Diabetes is a life-long condition but should not affect the life chances and aspirations of the individual. By putting in place a simple plan, pupils with diabetes can be included in all activities with limited disruption to education.

A former Senco and director of Every Child Matters at a secondary school, Cate Wood is now a writer and trainer

Further information

- **Diabetes UK:** www.diabetes.org.uk
- **Accu Chek,** a website about managing diabetes: www.kids.accu-chek.co.uk
- **Diabetes,** a global diabetes community: www.diabetes.co.uk
- **Paediatric diabetes specialist nurse** – access via the local Health Authority or Health Trust
- **Equality Act and reasonable adjustments:** bit.ly/sc215-06

Setting up a plan to manage diabetes in school

The following suggestions may be helpful in setting up a plan for pupils with diabetes in school.

- Identify a lead teacher to ensure that the child is supported.
- Talk to the pupil and family and discuss how concerns can be addressed within a school context.
- Key staff should meet with the parents, child and paediatric diabetes specialist nurse (PDSN) or other health professional to set up the plan, which should be very detailed, covering all aspects of managing diabetes during the school day and any extra-curricular activities. It also needs to detail what needs to be done and who will do it. This must be distributed to all staff,

including supply staff, and should be pinned on the staffroom wall. Information will include:

- the name of the child
- details about the condition
- what to watch out for – hypo/hyper information
- what to do in the case of a hypo/hyper
- who to send for/inform
- who will supervise/perform blood tests/injections/carbohydrate counting if this is required (at least two people should be named)
- a plan for PE
- a plan for extra-curricular activities, including residential trips

- when the plan will be updated (at least annually, and every time the child's management changes).
- Ensure that all staff understand the issues and know what to do in an emergency.
- For younger children, communicate with parents through a daily home/school diary as well as regular discussions by phone or face to face.
- Identify a private room for blood testing and injections if the child wants this.
- Keep a supply of appropriate snacks – older children should keep some sugary snacks on their person at all times.
- PE teachers must ensure children have time to check their glucose levels before and after PE.



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Personalisation in the classroom

Supporting teachers to develop emotional intelligence and become more creative in their thinking will help them to bring out the best in pupils, says **Barbara Ball**

Tom, Year 7, had been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at primary school and, although able, had a long history of disruptive and verbally challenging behaviour.

He had a statement with £5,000 attached and his part-time teaching assistant found it hard to contain his impulsivity. When a teacher was addressing the class, he would call out, jump up and generally annoy other students. Staff had consistently followed the school's robust behaviour policy, with the result that Tom had spent time in detention and in internal exclusion, but with no noticeable effect.

Then one day his English teacher tried something different. Before the lesson began, she asked Tom to set up two laptops on a side table and get them ready for use. This included plugging them in, switching on, typing in the passwords and finding the relevant program. While he was happily getting on with this, she started

the lesson, throwing him an occasional question on the subject she was teaching – and he always responded correctly.

As she ended the introduction and summarised what the students were to do next, she asked Tom to repeat the instructions to ensure everyone understood. He did so, clearly, and then settled down to work on one of the laptops. The other was for a student with hypermobility syndrome who found it painful to write.

Lateral thinking

On the face of it, Tom's teacher had found a remarkably simple solution, so why had no one thought of it before? The answer lies in five key qualities that led her to make the breakthrough.

● **Emotional intelligence.** She had tried to put herself in Tom's shoes and see things from his perspective. Why did he find it so hard to sit still? What made him call out all the time? Then she had adapted her normal way of

doing things to see if that would help him to settle down and engage.

- **Solution-focused thinking.** Rather than dwelling on the negatives, she had looked for a way of tapping into his strengths by allowing him to multi-task.
- **Flexibility.** She had relaxed one of her golden rules – that everyone must give her their undivided attention when she was explaining something.
- **Creativity.** She had used her imagination. Her solution wasn't in any teacher's manual.
- **Experimentation.** She had been prepared to risk failure. Tom might have played games instead of loading the correct program. Or he might have had a technical problem and thrown a tantrum when she didn't come over straight away to help him out. But it was worth a try.

The result was a response that targeted Tom's specific difficulties – a personalised approach created just for him.

successful with other children and see if it works in this instance too.

Removing barriers to learning

Presenting a child who has learning difficulties with a new challenge can lead to one of three responses – flight, fight or freeze. We still want to challenge these children, but in a way that doesn't push their anxiety levels through the roof.

“ A child doesn't need to have a label before you take action ”

One approach is to give them five minutes' thinking time after asking a question. Or you might allow them to record their work in different ways – children who are reluctant to speak out, for example, may have a lot to say if they are allowed to respond on paper. Meanwhile, others may find the very act of writing so difficult, they can't cope with anything more, in which case you could allow them to use a tablet with voice-to-text or predictive text. Of course you will still want to work on their writing and spelling, but for tasks like research or extended writing, providing a tool that eases the writing process allows them to progress their learning.

Other useful strategies include giving children a short break or letting them stretch their legs for a few minutes if they show signs of becoming stressed. Then what you are left with is the challenge of the work and not the access to the work.

Non-punitive behaviour strategies

There is nothing inherently wrong with a robust behaviour policy. On the contrary, most children respond positively to a framework of clear boundaries and a structured system of rewards and sanctions that is applied consistently and fairly. But for some children, they don't produce the desired results. However, instead of addressing them with a punitive, "That's enough! You're on amber warning!", we need to ask ourselves what lies behind their apparent inability to cooperate.

Something that is quite common and rarely considered is a poor working memory. The pupil in question may be quite bright and articulate, making it easy to miss the fact that they find it hard to hold much information in their head at a time. Then when they are given a string of instructions, the only one that sticks is the

last one and they get into trouble for not doing as they were asked. The solution is to write these down in sequence, so they have a checklist to fall back on. That works well with children with autism or high anxiety levels too.

One very effective strategy I have used with children like Tom who can't help blurting things out is to give them a notepad where they can note down anything they want to say, knowing that later in the lesson we will sit down together to go through all the points they wanted to make.

Another non-judgemental approach is to have a couple of desks with MP3 players and headphones in a corner of the classroom which anyone can use when they want somewhere quiet to work by themselves. Then when a child is becoming restless or starting to get upset by their neighbours, you might say gently, 'Do you want to go and work on the quiet table? Would that help?'

Barbara Ball is the director of ASEND (Advice and Support for SEN and Disability). <http://asend.co.uk>

Differentiation

Coming up with a personalised approach for every pupil with special educational needs and disabilities might seem a daunting task, but it needn't be, as long as teachers are aware of children's diverse ways of learning and have lots of strategies at their disposal to try out in different situations.

Making your classroom supportive to pupils with speech, language and communication needs, dyslexia and autism is a good place to start, as these three conditions have a lot in common. Strategies for autism can be particularly helpful. If you are using a lot of visuals, asking open questions, being very clear in your language and breaking down instructions, you will be supporting other groups too. Then only a very small number of children will remain who still require something specific to them.

A child doesn't need to have a label before you take action. Look at how they learn, then use a strategy that has proved

It starts at the top

Qualities like emotional intelligence don't just materialise by themselves; they need to be nurtured. A more flexible, creative approach also requires whole-school commitment – if one teacher's innovative strategies run counter to the general ethos of the school, they will lose much of their impact.

In addition, teachers need to know they can rely on senior management support when things go wrong. If Tom's teacher had thought she would be criticised if Tom lost his cool and ended up in serious trouble, would she have risked trying out her new strategy in the first place? Unlikely.

Finally, the senior leadership's approach towards staff needs to be the same approach that teachers should have towards their pupils – understanding and appreciating that everyone is different and enabling them all to develop new skills in a supportive, unthreatening environment.

What school leaders can do

- Provide mentoring, coaching and an open forum for sharing ideas.
- Facilitate open and transparent one-to-one and group discussion.
- Allow teachers to be creative and share ideas.
- Encourage solution-focused thinking – don't dwell on problems, but clarify them and consider options.
- Support teachers to experiment, take risks and learn from their mistakes.
- Provide back-up support.
- Maintain an open, friendly and optimistic attitude – emotions are contagious.



Recording, celebrating and supporting progress

Silvana Mengoni and **John Oates** explain how Developmental Journals help teachers and families to build on the positive achievements of children with SEND

Robert is five, but his developmental profile is lagging behind his chronological age. This makes it hard for his teacher to monitor his progress using standard assessment tools, as he learns things differently from other children and advances in smaller steps. Today she noticed that for the first time Robert joined in when the class was reciting a well-known rhyme. Using his Early Support Developmental Journal, she shared this achievement with his parents and located it in a developmental sequence.

Through this informal dialogue, she and Robert's family were able to work together to reinforce his new skill through appropriate activities and anticipate what the next steps might look like. It also paved the way for a fruitful discussion where his parents contributed to the target-setting process and the identification of suitable additional support to address their son's specific needs.

A child-centred approach

The journal Robert's teacher was using was one of a series produced by Early Support to help the families of children with special educational needs (SEND) to observe, record and celebrate progress and share this information with others, including teachers, health workers and specialist practitioners.

Their production has been led by our team from the Child and Youth Studies Group at the Open University, with input from families, and practitioners and academics specialising in child development and SEND. There are several versions, designed for children with different needs (see box right). All are guided by the Early Support ethos of empowering families and putting them at the heart of decision-making, supported by a co-ordinated key working approach (see *Key working, Special Children 211*).

The three latest additions are:

- **Early Years Developmental Journal** (birth to age five), revised from an earlier generic edition to fit in with the new Early Years Foundation

Stage (EYFS) framework

- **School Years Developmental Journal**, which tracks typical progress from age five to 18
- **Developmental Journal for Children and Young People with Multiple Needs.**

Four areas of development

The main body of all three journals comprises behaviours or skills that parents and practitioners can easily observe in children in the course of everyday life without the need for special materials or testing. They are structured into four areas of development:

- personal, social and emotional
- communication
- physical
- thinking.

There is space to write down when a certain behaviour or skill is emerging (seen for the first time), developing (seen sometimes) or achieved (seen often), and a section for notes. It is helpful to date when these behaviours or skills are

observed, with examples of how they were demonstrated, as this can provide the basis for future discussion as well as creating a record to look back on.

Some practitioners may choose to work on a single area of development – for example, a speech and language therapist might focus on communication, while a physiotherapist might select the physical section. The areas overlap and interact, however, so specialists may still find it useful to look at other sections too.

Getting started

Before embarking on the process, you need to evaluate which journal would be most appropriate for the child concerned. You then need to establish where in the journal is the best place to start.

Early Years and School Years

In both the Early Years Developmental Journal and School Years Developmental Journal, behaviours are sequenced into developmental steps, with a narrative description for each one. There is also a set of ‘key indicators’, which will help you to identify the step that best reflects the child’s current level of ability.

It is not uncommon for children to be further ahead in one of area of development than in another, so it is wise to explore each of the four areas separately when deciding where to start.

The accompanying ‘how to use’ and ‘practice’ guides show the corresponding age range in typical development for each step, which can also be helpful if you already have an approximate idea of the child’s developmental level.

Multiple Needs

The Developmental Journal for Children and Young People with Multiple Needs is slightly different. First, it doesn’t have ages associated with it, as the child’s ability level is more relevant to determining suitability than their chronological age.

Second, in the place of steps, the behaviours are presented as Can Do cards that describe how children might show a particular skill in different ways, with suggestions for appropriate reinforcement activities and lots of space to note down relevant information and record progress.

The approach we recommend with this journal is to look through the index of items and select the cards you would like to work on. These are organised in the order they most commonly appear, but again you may find that a child is more advanced in one area than in another.

Working together

The journals are most effective when used in partnership, enabling everyone who works with the child to build a more complete picture of their abilities in different settings and with different people.

“A child may be more advanced in one area of development than in another”

For teachers and other professionals, they offer a detailed way of making assessments and tracking progress in the context of key areas of development, so that targets and activities can be adjusted if necessary. They encourage continuous observation rather than taking a snapshot of the child’s ability at a particular moment in time. And, of course, they provide a simple but effective means of communication between home and school, as we saw in the case of Robert.

Meanwhile, feedback from families indicates that they appreciate the way the journals are sensitive to the small but significant steps that their child makes, helping them to focus on what their child can do, rather than what they can’t. They also value the insight they gain into the patterns of development professional practitioners are looking for, giving them the confidence to make their voices heard and play a full part in the decision-making process.

Families find the journal especially useful when they meet a practitioner for the first time, as the detailed record it contains allows them to demonstrate their child’s current stage of development and chart the path they have taken to reach that point. Likewise, they can use it at review meetings with professionals who see their child on an occasional basis – such as educational psychologists or occupational therapists – to explain the progress that has been made since their child’s last visit.

In a nutshell

In summary, the journals help parents to:

- notice more
- understand the importance of what their child is doing as they learn new things
- share what they know about their child
- understand what practitioners may be

looking for and how they think about development

- ask questions
- know what to expect next
- discuss how things are going and agree what to do next to help their child.

They help practitioners to:

- work in partnership with families and with each other
- communicate more effectively
- build up a more accurate picture of what a child is able to do and therefore give better advice
- discuss and agree integrated goals so that everyone working with the child is focused on the same development priorities
- identify emerging issues early.

These attributes are highly pertinent in view of the forthcoming SEND reforms, with their emphasis on placing children and families at the centre of the system, the integration of education, health and social care, and early identification of SEND. Early Support is a delivery partner for these policy changes and the Developmental Journals provide a flexible tool that can help the different parties involved to meet the new requirements.

John Oates and Silvana Mengoni from The Open University’s Child and Youth Studies Group led the team responsible for creating the new Early Support Developmental Journals

Find out more

Freely available in pdf format, the series comprises:

- Early Years Developmental Journal
- School Years Developmental Journal
- Developmental Journal for Children and Young People with Multiple Needs
- Developmental Journal for Babies and Children with Down Syndrome
- Developmental Journal for Babies and Children with Vision Impairment
- Monitoring Protocol for Deaf Babies and Children.

How to Use guides and the *Practice Guide to the Early Years Developmental Journal* provide practical information and advice, including how to use the journals in conjunction with the EYFS framework and P scales. Electronic versions and a guide to using the journals with children who have autism will be available later this academic year. bit.ly/sc215-10

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**PREPARE FOR
CHANGES TO
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Dealing with work avoidance

Andrew and Beth Chadwick offer insight and practical tips to help pupils who won't knuckle down

Most of us exhibit work avoidance at some point and the excuses we make are by nature the same that pupils use to resist learning situations. So we know from our own experience that the more you push someone to work, the less likely they are to comply. It is only by commitment and desire that they will change.

Ascertain the cause

To help a pupil succeed and complete tasks set, it is important to ascertain why they seek to avoid work. This is not usually the result of laziness but can frequently be linked to:

- fear of failure
- feelings of inadequacy
- poor organisational skills
- a mismatch between teaching and learning styles
- poor attention skills
- low self-esteem
- perceived lack of relevance of the task
- a tendency to procrastinate
- fear of losing face in front of peers.

It may also be symptomatic of a specific learning difficulty or social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Conditions or circumstances that can result in work avoidance include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), epilepsy, dyslexia, dyspraxia, autistic spectrum disorders, sensory processing disorder, attention seeking, young carer responsibilities and pathological demand avoidance syndrome.

Challenging behaviours: what to know and what to do

These resources are reproduced with the kind permission of Andrew and Beth Chadwick from their book, *Challenging behaviours: what to know and what to do*. The book includes detailed strategies for various types of behaviour such as swearing and verbal abuse, theft, bullying, attention seeking, drug abuse, low self-esteem and sexualised behaviour, as well as case studies, activities, information hand-outs and sources of help.



Published by Speechmark, £65. www.speechmark.net



Pupils mess around for many different reasons

Anxiety, whatever the root cause, is a major obstacle to success. All new learning requires self-direction and the willingness to take risks. Seifert (2001) demonstrated that confidence and control were associated with successful learning but that any fear, inadequacy, lack of control or lack of meaning could lead to work avoidance.

Supportive strategies

Work avoidance is not just refusing to put pen to paper but relates to the whole learning experience and the pupil's personal needs within it. The strategies overleaf reflect this diversity and will not therefore apply to every situation. Teachers should try several techniques and measure their efficacy, using only those that are relevant to the pupil in question.

In general terms, however, good classroom practice means you should always:

- set appropriate work that is within the pupil's capabilities
- ensure that they understand what the task involves and how to begin it
- provide support to help them learn how to start an activity so that settling down to work becomes a habit
- chop work into small manageable steps so that they finish tasks and experience success, which will build their self-esteem and raise personal expectations
- employ a variety of approaches, including multi-sensory learning
- provide opportunities to practise basic skills
- praise effort and achievement
- give constructive feedback.

The following pages offer detailed strategies for various symptoms for work avoidance.

Difficulties listening to and following instructions

Check that the pupil can hear and understand the language used, and examine the extent to which they can focus and listen. If their attention frequently wanders, try to find a pattern in these episodes. Do they occur at the start or end of sessions, or in particular subjects or learning environments? Try to ascertain if they have attention difficulties in other environments too, including at home. A very wide pattern may suggest a specific difficulty such as ADHD, so this will be worth investigating.

Strategies to try

- Sit the pupil near an adult or relocate their seating to minimise distractions. Perhaps a move to the front, the back or to a workstation (where screens on each side minimise external stimuli) may help them concentrate.
- Keep good eye contact and positive links.
- Use their name to draw their attention back to you as it wanders, and also when success is being achieved.
- Give short instructions, one task at a time, and link these to visual cues.
- Get them to repeat the instruction back to you, praising every correct recount.
- Match listening expectations to developmental ability.
- Ensure that they experience success so that they have something to build upon in future learning situations.
- Explicitly teach good listening habits, demonstrating how to sit, where to look and where to place their hands.
- Encourage older students to monitor their own attention. Tell them (and mean it!) that it is all right to say, 'I tuned out. The last thing I remember was... Can you repeat...?'
- Allow note taking.

Poor organisational skills

Try testing and assessing the pupil's short-term or working memory. Examine their ability to sequence a series of instructions. Poor memory or sequencing difficulties will lead to confusion and the appearance of disorganisation.

Strategies to try

- Ensure equipment is accessible and ask the pupil to identify what they feel they need for the task.
- Prioritise. Approach organisation one task at a time.
- Display visual checklists to direct and remind pupils what they need.
- Praise effort and success.
- Model good organisation by labelling cupboards, trays, baskets and so on. Keep routines and patterns for storage obvious and consistent.
- Reinforce learning with mnemonics and memory games and display these prominently.
- Work with home to create similar systems, such as prompt lists pinned up in appropriate places for tasks like getting the pupil to make their own packed lunch or put their own clothes away.
- Develop expectations for independence both in school and at home. So instead of finding things for them, ask, 'Where do you think it could be?' It is important that the tone of voice is not accusatory or exasperated but simply delivered to support them in logically considering the solution to their problem.
- Allow some controlled failings and then revisit with care and support. For example, 'Do you need a coat? No? OK.' When they return cold and wet, gently discuss the personal learning that the experience provided.

Helplessness

Observe when the pupil does not exhibit helplessness and try to identify why – they may have difficulty with a particular area of the curriculum or teaching style. Examine whether they are more successful in whole class, groups or working individually – this may demonstrate social or self-esteem issues. Find out if they behave helplessly at home and consider whether the task set is at an appropriate level for their abilities.

Strategies to try

- Present all tasks in small, achievable steps. Praise the completion of each one.
- Provide close adult support so that pupils experience success and completion.
- Create over-learning opportunities to consolidate their learning, and build success and confidence.
- Use positive, inclusive phrases, such as 'we can', to help empower them.
- Teach them to evaluate their own effort realistically. Initially they will claim that they are 'trying their best' because this will help them to maintain the level of attention they receive.
- Create an ethos of progress and success through display, photographs and personalised success booklets.
- Allow them to feel like an expert by directing them to use their skills to work with younger children, perhaps as a playground buddy or by listening to readers. Encourage parents to adopt similar strategies to develop the pupil's belief in their own abilities.

Refusal to work or co-operate

Check that the pupil understands the language being used and that the task is pitched at their academic level. Examine whether they engage socially and with whom they cooperate best. Consider whether their refusal is a long-standing issue and whether previous teachers have experienced similar behaviour. If so, it may be beneficial to consider whether they are displaying behaviours consistent with oppositional defiance disorder or a similar condition. If not, find out whether there are changes in the pupil's family, home or social situation, which might need to be addressed.

Strategies to try

- Ensure the pupil knows what to do, so repeat instructions and support them to start the task.
- Ensure they understand the reason for the task and that it is relevant.
- Praise others nearby for working.
- If lack of cooperation is unusual behaviour, ask them what the difficulties are. If they can't explain, supportively offer suggestions. Is it too hard? Were they able to hear the explanation? If they are unwilling to say, ensure that they are aware that they can talk after the lesson.
- Play games that involve cooperation so that they learn skills away from academic tasks.
- Praise achievements, even if these are only a fraction of what you were aiming for.
- Develop their confidence, self-image and positive class status by giving them opportunities to be successful in work and cooperative tasks, so that they receive positive reinforcement rather than attention for



Give pupils adult attention and praise them generously

- negative traits.
- Give them jobs to do in the class that are related to the tasks, even if it is just handing out the equipment. This provides non-threatening opportunities for success, praise and self-esteem building.
- Plan work and activities around their interests.
- Present limited choices. For example, 'Your task is to finish those five questions. If you choose not to do it now, you are choosing to do it during breaktime.' Then step away and allow them to decide.
- Avoid public confrontations but follow up later when there is no audience.

Easily distracted

Follow the general guidance provided in the previous section on *Listening to and following instructions*.

Other strategies to try

- Consider where the pupils sit. Would putting them near an adult support them or draw more dependency or attention seeking? Would providing a low stimulus workstation help? Perhaps it would be helpful to seat them near good role models so that they can observe good behaviours and can receive group praise and so increase motivation and self-esteem.
- Use their name positively to ensure they are focused and listening.
- Ensure that all equipment is available so that tours of the classroom are not required.
- Create an ethos of conditional rewards. 'When you have... then you can...' Use praise and positive attention when they are on task.
- 'Call in' on the child frequently to keep them on task so that the length of time they can maintain focus will increase. Add 'dots' in the margin of their work so that you can both see their progress between the two-

three-, five-minute gaps between your visits. (Binder *et al*, 1990).

- Adjust your lesson presentation and curriculum to allow a 'task, task, reward/free choice, task, task, reward/free choice' progression.
- Provide small achievable tasks that the pupil can finish, which will give them a sense of completion and success. With every step ensure that generous praise and adult attention is given. The task can be the same as the rest of the class; what is important is that it is presented in small, manageable pieces.
- Ensure clear class expectations for any transitions or movements around the room.
- Have clear rules and systems for finished work so that self-regulation can develop.
- Develop good parental links so that concepts of 'finished' can be reinforced at home.
- Encourage self-monitoring through the use of timers and informal reviews at the end of lessons.
- Be clear about your expectations. For example, half a page, 400 words, six sentences. Praise effort and progress towards the set aims.

Independent learning for secondary pupils – a self-help guide



Revise with a friend and test each other

Prioritise and plan

Prioritise and plan your day, look at all of the homework and revision that has to be done. Determine which tasks are urgent and do these first.

Create a schedule

Schedule your day – list work tasks first and then build the rest of the day round these.

By putting your work as your ‘prime time’, you will be most focused. Anything not achieved is rescheduled for the next day.

SMART targets

Set SMART targets:

- specific
- measurable
- achievable
- relevant
- time bound.

Reward yourself when you reach them.

Music

If you find music helps you to concentrate, use it to motivate you and set a timescale. Select two or three CDs to play before you can stop. Allow yourself freedom to dance and move whilst, say, learning vocabulary, because this alleviates boredom and makes it fun.

Rewards

‘Earn’ leisure activities. For example, an hour of revision might ‘earn’ you 15 minutes of computer games, say. No revision, no gaming.

Get help!

Challenge friends to a revision competition or set each other questions where the loser provides the others a treat of some kind.

Avoid boredom

Switch between study materials. Don’t just give up and justify work avoidance with, ‘I’m full of physics, I need to relax,’ and so play computer games.

Keep to the time you’ve set and change subjects. Move round the room or find different ways to study, perhaps using the computer, then pencil and paper, study DVD or notes, reading, reciting... but don’t give in to the avoidance.

Change your workspace to revitalise your mood: move from the study, to the living room, to the garden. Give yourself a small treat to keep yourself focused.

Short breaks

Don’t allow big breaks in revision. Three days off just means you have to go through the ‘start day’ again, and ‘start days’ are never very efficient.



Working collaboratively to solve problems

Engagement and achievement

Early identification of SEND and an innovative approach to teaching and learning are raising achievement across the board at a Birmingham secondary school.

Dorothy Lepkowska reports

‘Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress. Teachers and other adults prepare work for these students at just the right level, and the extra help they give to students makes a big difference.’

This was the conclusion of the Ofsted team which visited Queensbridge visual and performing arts school in February 2013. It was one of many attributes that earned the inner-city Birmingham secondary an outstanding rating in every category. Not bad when you consider that about a third of its pupils have special needs ranging from physical disabilities to emotional and/or learning difficulties, and up to half speak English as a second language.

‘Special needs provision is a whole-school issue for us,’ says Senco Kate Squires. ‘Everyone has a vested interest in ensuring that pupils receive the best and most appropriate provision we can offer.’

Knowing every pupil

One of the keys to the school’s success lies in knowing each child really well, and

“ **A dedicated team of non-teaching heads of year monitors students’ well-being** ”

this begins before they even arrive.

‘We have good communication with our feeder primaries and we know on entry who has already been identified as having special needs,’ Ms Squires explains. ‘We do our own assessments at the start of Year 7 and continue to routinely monitor reading and writing, as well as the quality of speaking and listening. That applies to everyone, irrespective of ability or learning needs.’

On the pastoral side, the school has a dedicated team of non-teaching heads of year, who monitor students’ well-being and identify those with behaviour problems and emotional difficulties. They then decide what the school can do to support them, either internally or by bringing in outside agencies where

appropriate. This is an on-going process that takes place on a daily basis.

‘Emotional and behaviour problems can be tricky,’ remarks Ms Squires. ‘Sometimes a child is doing reasonably well, but then something happens at home and they suddenly start struggling to engage. Then six months later everything is OK again. So it’s a case of staff being vigilant and talking to each other if they spot something.’

To ensure that this happens, staff receive training in what to look out for, including potential signs that might indicate a problem of a more serious nature. ‘We take child protection issues very seriously. It is about knowing what questions to ask and when,’ she says.

Pastoral structure

A central plank of the supportive ethos of the school is the team of five heads of year, who are readily available if students need someone to talk to or have a problem they want help with.

‘Because these members of staff have no classroom commitments, they are able deal with issues straight away, rather than

letting them drag on and perhaps lead to greater problems,' says Ms Squires. 'At any given time, one of them will always be in their office and ready to offer support as and when the need arises.'

'They are also available and visible at break and lunchtime, which means that pupils have a stable group of staff they can turn to, and who keep an eye out for them when they leave the supervised environment of the classroom. This provides that consistency of care that is so reassuring for students.'

For families, it is equally reassuring to know that they can speak to someone straight away if they are worried about their child, rather than having to wait for a teacher's next free period or until the end of the day. The year heads' non-teaching status also allows them to spend more time doing home visits and liaising with outside agencies.

Students who need help are also encouraged to speak to their form tutor or to Ms Squires herself. 'We rely heavily on this network of relationships,' she says, 'If one member of staff cannot deal with a specific problem then it is passed on to someone who can.'

'The feedback we get from parents shows they are hugely appreciative of this approach. They also comment on how much progress their children are making because of the way we teach and the opportunities this gives them to shine.'

Teaching and learning

The way the school teaches is certainly innovative. It begins in Year 7 when the timetable is collapsed for 13 hours a week to make way for an 'enterprise' curriculum, a project-based approach which explores 'big' questions such as 'How does it feel to be in someone else's shoes?' or 'How can I make a positive difference?'

It is a highly creative, hands-on approach, with the emphasis on skills as well as content, to encourage pupils to think for themselves, learn to collaborate with others and become independent learners. The activities it generates also provide lots of opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and reading abilities.

'Pupils and teachers alike have the freedom to explore different avenues,' says Ms Squires. 'It allows pupils to discover and build on talents that perhaps they didn't know they had while at the same time focusing on literacy. We consolidate basic skills and this is paying dividends, especially for children with special needs.'



Hands-on practical learning opportunities

“ Total immersion in a subject leads to better academic success ”

The approach has been so successful, a similar programme called Innova8 has been introduced for the following year group. In this case, pupils spend six hours a week for 12 weeks doing an in-depth project with a humanities focus.

'We find that total immersion in a subject leads to better academic success because the children can really get into it and show what they can do,' explains Ms Squires. 'It also helps to ease the process of transition, which can be so difficult and unsettling for some children. Working together on a project with the same member of staff, who gets to know them really well, is not so different from life as they knew it at primary school.'

Class organisation

These project-based sessions are organised on a mixed ability basis, an approach that extends to most areas of the curriculum.

'We have learned that success is not necessarily achieved by setting,' comments Ms Squires. 'In PE, music or art, for example, there is no need to set pupils and it is good for them to mix. They all learn from each other and can show what they can do, which is empowering and builds confidence and self-esteem, especially in the less able. Otherwise they pick up very quickly that they are in a lower set, which can be very discouraging.'

The exceptions to this approach are maths and English, where pupils are set by ability based on Key Stage 2 results from primary school. While acknowledging that this arrangement has to be managed with care, Ms Squires believes the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

'We might have children with dyslexia, say, who are high achievers, so we have to get the balance right and put the appropriate support in place to help that pupil maintain their place in the right set for their ability,' she says. 'However, it is true to say that the children with the greatest need tend to be in the lower sets.'

'On the plus side, lower ability groups tend to be smaller, which means that pupils get more attention. We have a team of eight teaching assistants (TAs)



Applying new learning to an independent writing task

and five learning leaders. The latter help with learning but also take on children with behaviour and emotional problems, making sure they are on task and engaged and focused.'

In-class support

TAs and learning leaders are also deployed to provide one-to-one support during enterprise and Innova8 lessons.

Ms Squires favours one-to-one, in-class support and uses it as often as possible to prevent stigmatisation of children with special needs and to ensure that they spend as much time as they can in the classroom with their peers.

However, the structure of these project-based lessons also allows time to be built in for children to be withdrawn for 15-minute slots of focused work on reading, comprehension or phonics without interfering too much with the progress of their work in class.

'We don't take them out of English or maths,' she says, 'and we don't keep them out for long to avoid giving them the impression they are being singled out. We also find they respond better to short, sharp bursts of targeted learning. Little and often is what works best for them, and they buy into it because they still get to do the same as everyone else.'

'In addition, because these sessions are so short, we can reach a lot more children, including many who don't have special needs. The pupils who do have learning difficulties see their classmates coming in and out of lessons, so there is no stigma attached to it.'

Peer support

Another feature of the school is its team of 44 Year 10 and 11 'student associates' to whom any pupil can turn for help or

support. Students have to apply for the role, and are selected on their ability to empathise. They are easily identifiable by the red shirts they wear as part of their uniform, and they are assigned to work with form groups.

'Even loveable rogues can become student associates if they have something positive to offer,' says Ms Squires. 'The team also includes pupils with special needs, and they act as role models for others.'

The school's excellent progress with pupils with SEND is complemented by its relationship with the Fox Hollies School for children with complex and profound learning difficulties, which shares the same site. The close ties between the two schools allow staff to share information and expertise, as well as enabling pupils to take part in joint projects and learning, including drama productions.

'It helps our students to mix with young people who are very different from them and who are successful in spite of the challenges they face,' comments Ms Squires. 'We also draw on the specialist knowledge and skills of the special school staff, and one of our Year 7 boys goes to both schools, as this is the ideal provision in his particular case.'

High expectations

Crucially, all students at Queensbridge, regardless of ability or special needs, know what stage they have reached with their learning and where they are going next.

'We make sure that we know what every pupil's starting point is,' says Ms Squires. 'That includes those students in wheelchairs, or with Down syndrome or who have hearing impairments. They are very clear about it too and they know where they are heading. There is an

In context

Queensbridge School is an inner-city Birmingham comprehensive with about 700 pupils, drawing from the socially deprived areas of Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook, although it is located on the borders of the more affluent suburbs of Moseley and Kings Heath. Its intake is skewed in favour of boys at a ratio of three to one because of the presence of a large girls' secondary school nearby. It is also affected by selection in the city and a number of grammar schools.

Almost half of Queensbridge pupils do not have English as their first language and there are 28 different languages, including English, spoken at the school. One third of pupils are entitled to free school meals and 31 per cent have special educational needs.

expectation that students with SEND will make at least three levels of progress by the time they leave school.

We try to make sure all students leave us with meaningful qualifications, so they can go on to college or take up an apprenticeship. Of course, some progress more quickly than others but we want them to excel at something they enjoy and to give them the important skills they need to get on in life.'

However, the latest government thinking on the academic and vocational is creating new challenges for staff.

'These changes in thinking and approach mean we have to look very hard at the qualifications we offer students,' she remarks. 'Currently they can do things like BTEC in music, performing arts, or sport. Everyone does at least one arts option because we want them to gain qualifications that are going to be useful to them and that they are interested in, regardless of their ability. We would like this to continue because many of our students won't succeed with a diet of nothing but GCSEs.'

Dorothy Lepkowska is an education journalist and editor

Enterprise curriculum

Activities related to 'How can I make a positive difference?'

Pupils look at children all over the world and 'visit' different countries, costing their travels as they go. They interrogate children's rights, look at where they are being abused, consider the actions they can take, conduct various campaigns and look at the work charities are doing to support children's rights. They also work with pupils from Fox Hollies special school on inclusion issues.

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Sencos get together to discuss their concerns and generate solutions

A fresh look at educational psychology

Kate Fallon outlines four case studies that illustrate how educational psychologists can support schools in ways they may not have considered

As changes take effect within schools, academies and local authorities (LAs), so too do changes in the way educational psychology services are delivered. Whilst most services continue to be managed and administered by local authorities, many establishments are now commissioning these services directly or requesting bespoke interventions that wouldn't have been possible under the old regime.

This opens the door to new ways of working, where schools, educational psychologists and the wider community pull together to improve outcomes for young people. As these four examples show, there is considerable scope for early intervention and innovation at a whole-community level, across a community of schools and within schools' own internal communities.

The lonely Senco

Sencos can feel isolated when left with difficulties they believe they are powerless to address. In 2011, drawing

“The supportive ethos extends beyond the sessions themselves”

on psychological models around solution-focused and collaborative problem solving, Blackpool educational psychology service developed the 'problem-solving cluster group', a method that has proved to be of extraordinary benefit to Sencos when they become 'stuck' in their thinking.

Mutual support

Each group contains between ten and 14 Sencos from primary, secondary and special schools, with an educational psychologist as facilitator. They meet twice a term to discuss a particularly challenging case presented by one of their number.

This person describes the problem, then the others ask questions to clarify the situation and determine any sub-problems and goals. The group then

comes up with practical suggestions for strategies and interventions, including different ways of thinking about the child and, crucially, of providing emotional support for the hard-pressed Senco.

For the Senco in question, it can unlock a seemingly intractable problem, as Diane Nixon from Devonshire Primary School explains.

'You might have exhausted everything in your toolkit and think there is nothing left, then someone suggests something you hadn't considered. It might be something new, or it might be a strategy you had used in the past and completely forgotten about,' she says.

Trying out new approaches

After every session she comes away with several pages of things to try, which she shares with class teachers and parents. At the next meeting, she updates the group on what has worked well and not so well, with the educational psychologist on hand to elaborate, extend ideas and offer other solutions.

The supportive ethos extends beyond the sessions themselves, and members

exchange strategies and resources through email. They also pick up ideas from the discussions about other people's problems. 'When you get a group of Sencos together, there is a lot of expertise you can tap into,' she says. 'A suggestion may be put forward that gets you thinking, "That might work with a child in my class too."'

The other thing she really appreciates is having a dedicated slot of time to pause and reflect. 'With the best will in the world, there is so much going on in school, you never have time to think,' she explains. 'It is wonderful to be able shut the door for a good two hours and know you won't be disturbed.'

Stability and consistency

Other Sencos share this view and they do their utmost to attend every session, although inevitably sometimes a crisis crops up at the last minute that can't be ignored. For specialist educational psychologist Debbie Shannon this is the only potential barrier to success.

'For the model to work effectively, it needs support from school management to release Sencos so that they can attend regularly to maintain stability and consistency,' she says. 'However, whilst there have been some blips in the past, over time things have run smoothly and staff are just as motivated today as they were in 2011.'

This is borne out by a recent evaluation, where 94 per cent of respondents rated the programme 'valuable' or 'extremely valuable'. One person reported that thanks to the cluster group, she and her pupils were now linking with a local special school on a regular basis, while another said the group's support had helped her to cope with demanding parents and remember to 'look after me'.

Bullying in and beyond school

In 2008, Solihull Council decided that tackling bullying across the community was one of its top priorities. Five years on, anti-bullying initiatives remain a key part of its Stay Safe programme.

'There have been three strands to our work,' says Mohammed Bham, principal educational psychologist and anti-bullying strategy lead. 'The first is for educational psychologists to work directly with children, young people and their families to listen, understand and offer support. Second, we have visited every school and talked to school leaders to see how their systems and practices could be improved to enhance preventative work. Third, we have engaged the wider community by



The winning poster for Solihull Anti-Bullying Week 2012 by Isabella of Peterbrook Primary School

establishing the Anti-Bullying Behaviour Alliance (ABBA), a multi-agency group involving police, community safety teams, mental health workers, education welfare officers, youth workers, schools and advisors.'

“The repercussions of bullying are not always immediate”

Opening up communication

One of ABBA's achievements has been the creation of a young people's group, which successfully campaigned for the establishment of an anti-bullying helpline for children and parents. Hosted by the educational psychology service, this 'duty line' has been promoted across all the relevant local workforces, including youth workers and pastoral staff, as well as through the council's family information website and 'Welcome to Secondary School' packs for schools to use in transition sessions for parents.

'It has created a medium for parents, carers and practitioners to have supportive conversations with educational psychologists,' says Mr Bham. 'This has allowed us to have direct involvement with bullying victims and bring in other professionals as a part of a holistic approach to ensuring the young person's well-being.'

Online activity

Another strand of Solihull's anti-bullying activity has been extensive research into how young people are bullied, by whom and over what. The principal medium for this has been the first ever cyber survey, which was referenced in Adrienne Katz's book, *Cyberbullying and E-safety* (see the review in *Special Children* 211).

'There are more and more cases of bullying through technology and one of the main issues we are now having to deal with is homophobic cyberbullying,' says Mr Bham. 'Solihull continues to ask young people about their experiences and perceptions of e-safety, bullying and well-being through a bi-annual survey conducted through schools.'

Promoting the message

ABBA has worked in partnership with all settings to promote the 'stay safe' messages, in particular during anti-bullying week.

'The ABBA young people's group is a particularly good model,' comments Mr Bham. 'Young people are supported by their peers and their efforts are facilitated by youth workers. This has allowed them to hold a conference on anti-bullying and to promote support services to other young people.'

Meanwhile the council has been using information gleaned from its surveys and support services to inform its strategies as it moves forward, while the different parties involved have been sharing good practice and borrowing from the effective approaches of other local authorities. This has in turn affected the way in which educational psychology services have tackled bullying with both educational settings and individual young people and their families.

In the classroom

One of their priorities has been to target the impact bullying can have on school attendance. 'Bullying can ultimately cause a young person to feel forced out of school,' explains Mr Bham. 'It's vital we don't let them become NEETs (not in education, employment or training).'

Poor attendance can arise from a combination of factors – perhaps the young person has special needs, which compound the impact of the bullying. Or they may be feeling low about their learning, which makes them more vulnerable to being picked on. The more lessons they miss, the harder it becomes for them to go into school, so the gaps in their education grow wider, making it harder still. And so the cycle continues.

'It's common for the welfare officer to get involved at this point,' says Mr Bham. 'However, they may then recommend a team approach because they don't have the expertise to deal with the learning dimension.'

'Educational psychologists, on the other hand, have multiple skills to draw on. They can work on the emotional



A TA's effectiveness depends on the team management skills of the classroom teacher

well-being side of the problem as well as the learning and child development side, and are experienced in working with families, across all age ranges and settings. It's about understanding the child's presenting issue in what we call the ecological model, in other words in the context of home, school, community and family. All of those areas need addressing.'

'The repercussions of bullying are not always immediate,' he adds, citing the example of a family he has been working with recently where the young person feels unable to go to school two years after the last bullying incident.

'It is about how it is played out in the young person's life,' he explains. 'We know it has a longer-term impact. When you locate where the problem originates, you may discover that lower level behaviours are being interpreted and associated with historical experience.'

Organisational change

Lifting his school out of special measures was the challenge facing Bobby Evans when he took over as headteacher of Notton House, a residential school in Bristol for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recognising the need for a radical change in organisation and culture, he turned to the LA's educational psychology services for help. Dr Jak Lee then worked with his staff to explore how they could improve the day-to-day functioning of the school, the learning environment, and ultimately the outcomes for pupils.

'It wasn't a case of writing the whole package at the start and then working through it,' she says. 'Organisational change needs to be implemented one step at a time. It is only effective if it is relevant to the context and whatever is happening at the time.'

Getting started

Her first step was to coach senior leaders, individually and as a team, to help them identify the changes they needed to make and why these were necessary. This period of reflection was important to ensure they all had a clear sense of what the school's mission should be and how they could each contribute to bringing it about.

During this process they agreed that Dr Lee should engage with the wider workforce, so that everyone had a voice in

this process of momentous change. 'If the whole organisation is to move forward, it is crucial that staff at all levels are able to take ownership of the vision and debate it,' she says. 'These conversations are not easy, which is why it helps to have an educational psychologist to facilitate them.'

Moving forward

Inset days revealed important issues that had to be resolved. 'If people approach things from opposing principles, such as attachment and behaviourist ethos, you will have some arguing for a system of clear, non-negotiable sanctions for poor behaviour, while others believe that sanctions should take account of what a child may have done to repair the situation,' she explains. 'So we had to have some serious discussions around the values and principles the school wanted to work under.'

Alongside this proactive approach she introduced some reactive measures, such as staff training in behaviour management techniques that would help to create a calmer, more settled school environment.

When 20 months later Ofsted gave the school a clean bill of health, Mr Evans attributed this achievement in no small part to Dr Lee's work in introducing his team to the principles and practice of change theory.

Leadership skills

Teaching assistants (TAs) were the reason Dr Lee was called into a day school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Or rather, not the TAs themselves, but the team management skills of the teachers they worked with.

'There are more and more adults in today's classrooms,' says Dr Lee. 'The trouble is that the skills that make someone a good teacher are not the same skills that make them a good

manager of adults.'

The dynamics can be quite tricky, she adds. 'You might have, for example, an experienced TA who knows the child and family really well working with a teacher who has only been qualified for a year. Yet the teacher is in charge, and needs to be directing the team and holding it together.'

“ Organisational change needs to be implemented one step at a time ”

From vision to practicalities

After doing some whole-school Inset on the vision, she worked with teachers on the specific skills they needed to develop, such as the ability to delegate or to get their team to communicate.

One of the strategies she gave them was a mechanism called solution circles, where they sat down with their team to discuss issues that were causing concern with particular pupils. She also taught them some coaching skills that would enable them to help their support staff to develop.

She is now introducing peer coaching, both here and in Notton House. 'That is the only way to make change sustainable,' she says. 'Now that less support is available from LAs, schools need to become self-sustaining and reflective organisations that manage change effectively. Educational psychologists can help schools and settings develop and embed the practices which are necessary for these cultures.'

Kate Fallon is general secretary of the Association of Educational Psychologists



Staff Inset provides a facilitated forum to debate the school's vision

Philip and a school friend collaborate in building a dam – lovely co-regulatory roles to achieve a joint goal



Developing resilience

Zoe Thompson explains how children develop resilience and how to foster it in children with autism

Two toddlers are building a tower of bricks. The first is receiving and clearly responding to positive emotional feedback from her parents as she piles brick upon brick. Her competence is 'spotlighted' by her parents and she continually glances at her mother, who claps in delight at her efforts. When the tower falls over, for a split second it looks as if she might cry, and then her father's 'Uh oh' re-centres her and she tries again, successfully.

The other toddler is clearly in a world of his own. He is determined and deeply focused, but he never once looks at his mother. When his tower falls down, he has another go. When it falls down again, he cannot cope.

The first child is typically developing and is learning resilience. The other has autism.

Tackling core difficulties head on

Like many children on the spectrum, the little boy's difficulties include inflexible thinking and hence behaviour. He also has problems managing uncertainty and change, sensory challenges, difficulties with social reciprocity and emotional regulation, and impairments in resilience.

The usual approach taken in mainstream autism education is to find ways of compensating for these core issues. The Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) programme tackles them head on. The thinking behind this approach is that children with autism can enjoy deep, emotional relationships if they are exposed to them in a gradual, systematic way.

After seeing the programme's remarkable impact on our elder son Philip, we introduced it to Bright Futures School, a special school for children with

autism we have set up in Oldham. We believe it gives our pupils the best chance of making and maintaining meaningful relationships, securing employment and living independently.

A key focus of the programme is on building resilience.

Bouncing back

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from setbacks, to anticipate future difficulties and steel yourself against them.

Children with autism have low resilience, and this has the potential to scupper an adult's engagement with them in many different ways, several times a day. Incidents can be triggered by issues that may appear insignificant to others: failing to open a bottle or ignite the gas cooker; not getting full marks on a computer game; being unable to fasten a button or wait in line in a lunch queue.

In some cases, this will lead to

withdrawal from a classroom or learning activity. In others it will result in an emotional outburst and/or a tirade of self-deprecating expressions of despair by the child: 'Why am I so dumb?' 'I'm useless.' 'I can't do anything right.' 'I hate myself.' 'I want to die'. Correspondingly, this leaves the supporting adult with negative feelings including disappointment, frustration, anger, despair and a sense of failure.

Flight, fight or freeze

Children with autism miss out on mastering key developmental milestones such as social referencing, joint attention and co-regulation, which contribute to their inability to think flexibly. This manifests itself as an inability to cope with uncertainty and change. The result is high levels of anxiety, with children often reacting in one of three ways: flight, fight or freeze, and escalating to what some parents call 'meltdowns'. They also take longer to recover their emotional equilibrium after a challenge than typically developing children.

Most of us experience fear and feelings of incompetence, which make us anxious from time to time. However, we also have thousands of memories of times when we successfully overcame a challenge. These experiences started being laid down in our early years in the special relationship we have with our parents, and enabled us to master the key developmental milestones and so develop flexibility and resilience.

Typically developing children are 'hooked' by the feedback they get from their parents, which motivates them to master the developmental milestones. During this process they lay down 'episodic' memories of themselves as competent individuals. However, autism derails this process because the condition interferes with the emotional feedback loop between child and parent.

Spotlighting competence

Episodic memories are autobiographical memories of events associated with emotions. Initially, our parents or carers spotlight these experiences of competence, resulting in episodic memories being encoded. Eventually we develop the ability to internalise this process and are able to encode the memories ourselves.

As time goes by we acquire a bank that we can draw on when confronted by a difficult task. Our brains automatically search for a similar experience to the new challenge and we use the feelings of success it generates to enable us to have a go at it.

There is now a considerable body of research that shows that episodic memory is impaired in autism.

Building towers

It is clear that the first toddler building her tower has encoded episodic memories because she is resilient enough to try again when the tower falls down. She is able to use the positive feedback from her parents to help her stay on task and to keep regulated. A crucial element of the feedback is the Dad's 'Uh oh!' – a shorthand vocalisation of the thoughts 'Oh no, what a shame, never mind, better luck next time!' The emotional feedback loop between the child and her parents is working. She borrows Dad's thinking (conveyed by his 'Uh oh!') to stop herself from getting upset and frustrated when things go wrong.

Typically developing children experience many 'uh oh!' situations when they successfully overcome a challenge – either on their own or with the help of a scaffold and some encouragement.

Typically developing children experience many 'uh oh!' situations when they successfully overcome a challenge

In contrast, the second toddler is unable to access emotional feedback and support because the autism has derailed the feedback loop. This toddler never looks at his parents for information about what to do. There is no shared attention and he is on his own agenda. When his tower falls down, he struggles to regulate himself, in contrast to the other child, who is able to take her mishap in her stride, replacing the brick and echoing her Dad's 'uh oh!'

(You can see a video of these two toddlers here: bit.ly/sc215-01)

Laying down episodic memories

Another example of laying down an episodic memory, and how it occurs naturally within the interpersonal engagement between child and caregiver, is captured in a video clip of me cooking with my two boys (bit.ly/sc215-02). They are trying to light the gas hob. My youngest, Louis, struggles and eventually succeeds.

Then Philip has a go. Prior to the work

Tips for developing a guiding relationship

- Slow your pace down to give thinking time. When you've slowed down, slow down some more.
- Use pauses to enable the pupil to reference you for information.
- Make sure you (the guide) and the pupil (the apprentice) have clearly complementary roles.
- Ensure the activity is within the pupil's competence (scaffold if necessary).
- Decrease verbal communication and increase non-verbal communication.
- Don't ask questions or give commands. Instead, use invitational (declarative) communication, or self-talk ('I wonder what I could use to cut this with...').
- Spotlight the pupil's competence with non-verbal communication (a smile, 'Oh wow!').
- Allow time-outs to facilitate emotional regulation if necessary.
- Focus on the relationship, not the activity.

we have done to build his resilience by promoting and spotlighting competence, he would have been reluctant to even attempt the task – the uncertainty around ignition would have triggered the fight or flight response. Today, however, he is determined to keep trying when he doesn't succeed at first. He mines episodic memories to give him the resilience to persevere. He is eventually successful (after one minute 55 seconds) and celebrates his achievement by turning to me to see my emotional reaction and sharing his own.

Referencing for experience sharing is one of the fundamental milestones I supported Philip to master at the beginning of our RDI journey. I say 'Nice!' and Louis says 'Philip did it!' which are both spontaneous, natural spotlights, leading to the encoding of another episodic memory of competence for Philip.

The guiding relationship

Spotlighting competence in order to encode episodic memories is fundamental to developing resilience. However, getting children with autism to the point where they can take up opportunities to demonstrate competence can be a long road, requiring the deployment of some specific competencies on the part of the adult. The key to this, in RDI terms, is to ensure the guiding relationship is in place.

Of course, my guiding relationship with Philip is firm. He trusts me not to push him beyond his edge of competence and

Autism

uses me as a point of reference to decide what to do when faced with uncertainty. I know that, as a guide, I need to make sure that we both have clear roles in an activity, that we are co-regulating our actions, and that I am ready to scaffold if difficulties loom.

I need to use pausing and pacing to allow my 'apprentice' time to think and to reference me for information and/or experience sharing. I need to be ready to support emotional regulation and to assertively set limits if necessary.

Planning is crucial

Another mum, Di, helps her young adult son Nick learn to peel a carrot. Nick is minimally verbal and has learning difficulties as well as autism. She demonstrates, and then guides him when his banging attempts with the peeler don't work. Then he suddenly gets it and after he peels just one piece, she spotlights his success and stops.

Then, because she can see that Nick is comfortable with the first challenge (peeling the carrot), she adds another (cutting the carrot) in a technique called 'edge plus one' – having taken Nick to the edge of his competence, she takes him one more step. However, she quickly realises that cutting carrots is physically difficult for him so she switches to cutting up a cucumber. (You can see her video here: bit.ly/sc215-03)

Di thought through the activities in advance and knew what she needed to have in place as a guide. She considered their respective roles, her communication style, the level of Nick's competence, pacing (one peel, one cut), scaffolding (the switch to a cucumber), and opportunities for him to problem-solve – after teaching Nick to peel the carrot, she asks: 'Now what could we use to cut it?' Nick finds some scissors and they experiment with trying to cut the carrot with these before she suggests trying a knife. Whilst sharing the experience with Nick, she also spotlights with her comment: 'You did it!' when he makes his first cut.

It sounds simple. If you have a chance to view these videos, the interactions appear straightforward. However, these small successes are the result of one or two years of practice with regular guidance and feedback from an RDI consultant.

The starting point

There are no quick tips for developing resilience in children with autism – the process takes years in typically developing children, with the process emerging via



Philip and Zoe Thompson making papier mâché buildings for a model town that he designed

thousands of hours of interpersonal engagement within the special guiding relationship. To support children with autism, the starting point is to ensure that a stable guiding relationship is in place. It is vital to establish the feedback loop that enables the adult to be the child's point of reference in times of uncertainty. In schools and other settings, therefore, there needs to be a clear focus on the one-to-one relationship between child apprentice and adult guide.

“ I need to use pausing and pacing to allow my 'apprentice' time to think ”

My school is currently negotiating for the families of some of its pupils to have an RDI home programme funded.

More recently, with the advent of education, health and care plans, the management team is supporting families of children placed in other schools to have their designated teaching assistant (TA) trained as an 'RDI extender' – in other words, training the TA on how to re-instate the guiding relationship and support the child to master key developmental milestones (including resilience) in their current educational setting.

The outcomes

Of the seven children at Bright Futures School, six were school refusers. One pupil had five previous unsuccessful placements where he was hitting out, picking fights and absconding. To look at him now you would think he was a different child. He even asks his taxi to pick him up earlier in the morning so that he can spend more time at school.

Meanwhile, the parents of other pupils have commented on their growing resilience and emotional regulation, enabling them to try out activities that they had previously avoided. I feel my own son would have spiralled into mental health problems were it not for the work we have done on resilience and other difficulties at the heart of autism.

Research evidence

Unfortunately there is no randomised controlled trial of RDI to prove its efficacy but there is good preliminary evidence. *Research Autism* acknowledges the current lack of scientific evidence but states: 'However, given the claims made for RDI and the level of the existing anecdotal evidence, we feel that further, objective research into the programme is justified.'

As a parent and educator, I don't want to wait 20 years for research to catch up with practice – by that time opportunities to develop resilience and flexibility will have passed a whole generation of children with autism by.

Zoe Thompson is an RDI consultant and head of development, Bright Futures School. www.brightfutureschool.co.uk She is a former councillor for the National Autistic Society and is currently on the advisory committee that is developing autism quality standards for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

Relationship Development Intervention

RDI can be used to influence practice in schools in one of two ways:

- either one or more staff become RDI consultants
- or RDI consultants collaborate with school staff.

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Charlene Shaw in conversation with ITT tutor, Ross Cotter

What's special about special?

The insights ITT students gain by working in a special school are invaluable, whether they go on to teach in special education or in mainstream. **Annie Grant** investigates

When Charlene Shaw, Matthew Maguire and Victoria Bates joined Middlesex University's secondary Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme in September 2012, each had a clear idea of the kind of teacher they wanted to be.

'I was bored at school,' explains Ms Bates, a chemistry graduate. 'I thought that through going into teaching, I would be able to stretch the gifted and talented.' Mr Maguire, a former participant in the Young Mayor Scheme, saw teaching citizenship as a way to help young people engage with the world around them. Ms Shaw planned a career teaching English.

One year on and all three are qualified teachers, but now with very different perspectives on their chosen profession.

Making SENSE of special needs

The three trainees benefited from an innovative training partnership between Middlesex University and Swiss Cottage School, an outstanding special teaching school in north London, which gave them the chance to experience teaching in special schools.

'Until recently,' says Ross Cotter, programme leader for PGCE English at Middlesex, 'trainees only touched on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) during their training.' In 2009, however, government funding allowed Middlesex to offer an optional, three-week special school placement at the end of courses. 'Take-up wasn't great. Out of 190 students, only twelve participated,' he adds.

In 2012, things began to change. Swiss Cottage and two other leading special schools received funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to develop, pilot and disseminate a framework to help other schools in the sector provide high-quality placements for trainee teachers.

'The SEN School Experience Project – SENSE – was a huge shift in thinking,' says Margaret Mulholland, director of development and research at Swiss Cottage. 'The government's intention was to encourage trainee or new teachers to spend a week in a special setting. We added the strapline, *Making SENSE of special needs* because we thought it made clear why experience in a special school was important.'

She goes on to point out that when trainees' experience is limited to mainstream settings, their contact with pupils with SEND is usually within classes of 30 or so, which is unlikely to give them the chance to identify an individual's potential or to develop the skills needed to help them realise it. A spell in a special school can bridge that gap.

'In special, you are able to focus on things you know you ought to be doing in your mainstream classroom but you don't because of the pace, the demand and the numbers,' she explains. 'Here, it's as if you see everything in slow motion so you can really engage with it, work at it and get it right before you bring it back into mainstream.'

'The opportunity of a lifetime!'

Ms Mulholland and Mr Cotter jointly introduced the SENSE project to the whole Middlesex secondary PGCE cohort and offered trainees the opportunity to spend a week working alongside teachers at Swiss Cottage. 'We hyped it as an opportunity of a lifetime,' remembers Ms Mulholland, 'and 40 people applied for the 25 places available!'



Charlene Shaw worked with pupils on the autism spectrum



Victoria Bates found much of what she learned applicable to mainstream teaching

A day conference at Swiss Cottage called *What's Special About Special?* was also provided for everyone, not just the SENSE trainees, just before their second mainstream placement. 'They talked to the staff about approaches to SEND,' explains Mr Cotter. 'Their brief was to think about how they could bring what they had learnt into their mainstream experience.'

Victoria Bates found a lot of what she learned at the conference immediately relevant to her mainstream placement. 'I used visual timetables with a disruptive Year 9 class and it helped keep them on task,' she says. 'When they saw that a demonstration was the next thing to come up, they finished their written work more quickly because they wanted to see it. And I also thought, why not use symbols and Makaton to support EAL students? So I did.'

A week in special

Following the conference, the 25 SENSE trainees, including Charlene Shaw and Matthew Maguire, started their five-day placement. They spent the first day as a group. 'It was a strong and celebratory introduction in which we set the scene and communicated high expectations for what we knew would be a challenging and rewarding week,' explains Ms Mulholland.

For the remaining four days, under the supervision of class teachers who also acted as mentors, trainees worked in pairs in classes for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). 'We were keen to pair them because we felt it would support dialogue about what they were gaining from the experience,' she says.

As well as practical teaching, trainees:

- took part in planning and assessment meetings with the class team

- attended workshops on particular topics
- were observed, and received group feedback focusing on pupil behaviours
- fed back to the group at the end of the week about what they had learned and its application to mainstream settings.

'There was such a buzz that week!' says Ms Mulholland. 'They'd really made sense of it and started to think about the value of the experience for them personally and as a teacher.'

“ In special, you are able to focus on things you know you ought to be doing ”

Insights gained

Ms Shaw worked with a class of pupils on the autism spectrum. 'It was interesting to see pupils similar to those I'd come across on my mainstream placement, and how the teachers and teaching assistants personalised their learning,' she says.

Key features of the SENSE project

- Handbooks to support school-based mentors and trainees.
- Pre-project information from trainees to support personalisation of their experience.
- An induction workshop and pre-visit.
- A one-week placement in a special school with a specific focus on teaching and learning.
- School-based workshops relating to trainees' focus areas.
- Comprehensive trainee workbook including a reflective practice log and links to further information.
- Joint learning reviews between mentors and trainees.

'I got to appreciate different types of progress, in social skills, for example. Now, if a mainstream pupil with autism manages to work well in a group, I know that's something to be praised and noted down as progress.'

Mr Maguire agrees. 'Doing the SEND experience made me think of every child as an individual learner and helped change my mindset in terms of what I'm in the classroom to do,' he says. 'I'm not there to perform at the front and be the show. I'm there to help them to learn and if my show is brilliant but they don't learn anything then there is no point.'

Back at university, the SENSE trainees made presentations to their peers on the applicability of what they had learned to mainstream, and Mr Cotter was amazed to see how well it translated into practice.

'It had a major effect,' he enthuses. 'They began to plan for the needs of individual students – personalisation rather than blanket differentiation – and were able to measure progress so much more effectively. They incorporated some of the physicality of special school teaching, thinking about how to reinforce visually what they were saying to pupils.'

Taking it further

The last piece of the Swiss Cottage/Middlesex partnership jigsaw was the introduction of an optional three-week special school placement at the very end of the PGCE course, made possible in 2012 by a government grant.

The partnership identified a number of high-quality special schools and settings which, supported by the SENSE framework materials, were willing to take trainees for an extended period. The range of expertise the schools offered – in behavioural difficulties, mental health and physical difficulties – enabled placements to be matched, as far as possible, to trainees' interests and needs.



Ross Cotter observing Charlene Shaw during her placement



Matthew Maguire was so bowled over by Swiss Cottage, he applied to work there

Mr Maguire and Ms Shaw chose to return to Swiss Cottage, joined by Ms Bates. Mr Maguire worked with a class of pupils with PMLD. 'It's something I requested,' he explains, 'I'd worked with pupils with MLD during SENSE and I wanted to see what learning and progress looked like for non-verbal students.'

Career choices

University of Warwick's (2011) review of government SEND initiatives concluded that trainees who had undertaken extended special school placements felt better prepared to teach pupils with SEND than those who had not. They were also more likely to consider a career in a special school or a mainstream school with a specialist unit or resource base.

'Longer term, schemes like this will provide us with a talent spotting and succession management system,' says Ms Mulholland. 'We're delighted to have recruited Matthew this year.'

For his part, Mr Maguire, who had 'fallen in love with the pupils and the whole environment', was thrilled to be appointed although he had not considered a career as a special school teacher initially. 'Everyone is so positive and supportive. Everyone is pulling for the same team – it's the sort of place I really enjoy getting up in the morning and coming to,' he says.

Meanwhile Ms Shaw does not rule out returning to teach in a special school in the future. 'I think I'll do a few years in mainstream to gain experience,' she says, 'but I can definitely see myself coming back into special when I'm a bit older.'

Ms Bates' perspective on mainstream education has also been turned around by her three-week placement. 'I saw such good practice that consistently gets results, and those skills are transferrable,' she says. 'Now I'm thinking not just about pupils' academic success, but their sense of achievement and their self-confidence. And I'm taking that into my comprehensive school.'

Wider benefits

Ms Mulholland believes that having trainees in school has wider benefits. 'Helping them to reflect on their practice encourages us to think critically about our own practice too,' she says. 'It has given staff opportunities to develop their skills in a new context and to see the value of what they have to offer to mainstream schools.'

“ Doing the SEND experience made me think of every child as an individual learner ”

Ms Bates testifies to the benefits from her standpoint. 'It's taught me the importance of reflection,' she explains. 'As a trainee, the requirement to evaluate everything can get quite tedious, but when you see an experienced teacher reflecting on progress and considering how to approach the next lesson, you start to realise that maybe you're asking the wrong questions and you learn how to do it better.'

Swiss Cottage has a culture of peer coaching and dialogue following lesson observations, which made it easier for experienced staff to be effective in their new role as teacher trainer and mentor. However, Ms Mulholland concedes that, in future, colleagues in special schools or settings unused to hosting trainees will need some additional training and structure to support a comprehensive shift to school-based training.

An ambassadorial system

The partnership is now exploring the possibility of extending their collaboration to enable Middlesex trainees to complete one of their assessed placements in a special school. However, both the SENSE project and the extended placement scheme depend on continuing government support and uncertainty

about future funding makes planning difficult.

Ms Mulholland feels that, in the longer term, such projects could potentially change the relationship between mainstream and special schools. 'We want mainstream schools to recognise how they can work with us to enhance their professional development,' she says.

Through its work with Middlesex University, and similar bespoke projects with the Institute of Education, University of London and St Mary's University College, Swiss Cottage has provided opportunities for 440 trainees to experience teaching in a special setting this year. 'We've created an ambassadorial system,' explains Ms Mulholland. 'When trainees go into mainstream, they're going to communicate the relevance and transferability of what they've seen. They may find it difficult to apply some of the things they've learned but they are beginning to think differently about planning, and their expectations are different.'

Former trainees agree. 'It's important that Swiss Cottage continues this type of work,' says Ms Bates, 'not just as a gateway to a career in special school for people like Matthew but also for people like me, mainstream teachers who want to be at the forefront of pedagogy.'

In her new post teaching English at a mainstream academy, Ms Shaw is clear about her approach. 'If they can't learn the way I teach,' she says confidently, 'I'll teach the way they learn.'

Annie Grant is a freelance consultant, producer, writer and editor

Find out more

- Secondary PGCE courses at Middlesex University: bit.ly/sc215-19
- Swiss Cottage Development and Research Centre: www.swisscottagedrc.org

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Kevin Mitchell, Assistant Head teacher, Devonport High School for Boys



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A valuable resource

Ofsted's approval of Ronald Ross Primary School's use of sixth formers to provide extra reading support was good to see (*Special Children* 214).

For many years now, our secondary school has had a system that requires all sixth formers to do community service within the school every week and many of them have done paired reading or spelling. They have also worked as TAs in class, or as buddies or mentors. It has worked really well, especially with some of our disengaged boys and pupils with a visual impairment or autism.

Students apply for a role that interests them, are selected by interview and then trained by a relevant member of staff. Some faculties have trained them to act as scribes and readers for internal tests and assessments,

while other students have taken on technician type roles in art, drama, IT, PE or technology. We've also had sixth formers run some of the school sports teams.

Meanwhile Year 11 students can volunteer for a buddying scheme, where they work with tutor groups, act as one-to-one buddies for vulnerable pupils, or become playground buddies to facilitate positive interaction at break and lunchtime. They work with new pupils from transitions day onwards, attend our Year 6 parents meetings and help out at our summer school in August. This system has been so successful, we almost have too many students wanting to take part!

Lucy Stephen, inclusion manager, Uplands Community College, Wadhurst, East Sussex

iPads and learning

Some people are still very sceptical about the use of tablets in schools so I was heartened to read your features on this subject in *Special Children* 214.

Since introducing iPads into our curriculum in 2012 through Birmingham eLearning Foundation, we have found them to be an invaluable tool for deepening learning. The pupils' enthusiasm has been incredible to watch and the devices are now an integral part of their daily lives. They do their own research, produce written work more readily and have become more independent learners. The standard of their work has vastly improved in a short space of time.

Perhaps the most surprising outcome has been the impact on their social and cooperative skills. In a class that had its fair share of squabbles, pupils now readily help each other out.

It also allows pupils with special needs to play to their strengths. Children who struggle with writing are often really good with technology and assist their more academic classmates by solving technical problems or sharing apps, which creates a level playing field and raises their self-esteem.

Andy Smyllie, headteacher, St Columba's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham

Pulling together

In the context of personal budgets (*Special Children* 214), I would like to draw attention to a two-year pilot which Scope is running in the local authorities of Trafford and Plymouth.

Made to Measure is funded by the Department for Education and its aim is to support parents and carers of children with disabilities to pool their personal budgets and to jointly buy short breaks and other leisure and recreational activities. Parents know best what type of services they need and this scheme is tapping into their experience in a way that has never been done before.

Each authority has two dedicated facilitators, who help parents of disabled children with similar interests to jointly identify the sorts of breaks or activities they are looking for. If these are not available locally, a single family is usually powerless to bring about change but the collective buying power of a group of families working together with our support is more able to stimulate and influence the local social care market, so that provision better meets their needs.

According to research conducted by Mencap in 2012, 29 per cent of local authorities had cut short-break services for children with a learning disability in the previous three years, causing distress to many families. That figure has no doubt increased by now.

Through this collaborative approach, we hope to maximise the impact of shrinking resources and ensure that parents get more targeted support for their children to the benefit of the whole family.

Find out more at bit.ly/sc215-08

Clive Perry, project manager, Scope

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Putting TAs at the heart of schools

Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants: Guidance for School Leaders and Teachers

By Anthony Russell, Rob Webster and Peter Blatchford

Published by Routledge

ISBN 9780415661287

£21.99

Reviewed by Maxine Houghton

Having experienced the joys of two visits from the mighty Ofsted in the past three months (I work across two secondary schools), I am very aware of the importance of showing impact in the use of other adults in the classroom.

Sencos and inclusion managers have been caught between a rock and a hard place on this one for some time now. Parents, who have fought for additional provision for their child, want tangible evidence of this funding – which generally means an adult with the child in the classroom or working with them one to one.

The evidence, however, suggests that this is far from effective. Politicians shout and journalists write about the rising cost of additional adults in schools – and those dedicated to supporting the most vulnerable pupils are blamed for poor attainment and progress.

Those of us blessed with a team of highly skilled, professional teaching assistants, without whom our thriving and inclusive schools would fail to cope with the growing level of complex needs, cannot imagine getting through a single day without them.

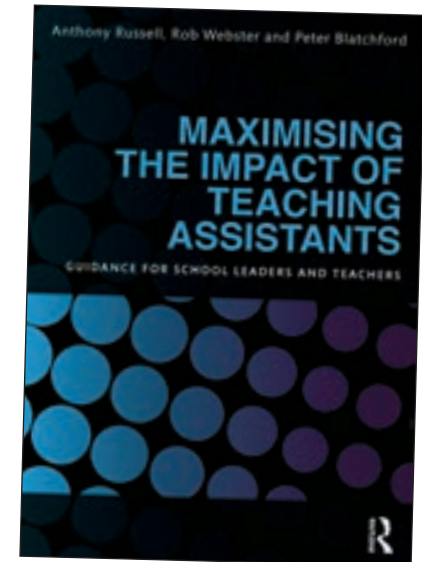
“Most importantly, it suggests a way forward”

This is why Sencos, inclusion managers and senior leaders need to read this book. It sets out the process and findings of the Effective Deployment of TAs (EDTA) project, which ran between 2010 and 2011, using data gathered through national research.

The aim of the project was to develop TA preparedness, deployment and practice in order to ensure positive impact. The authors recognise that TAs are an ‘integral part of classroom life’ in today’s schools and set out clear evidence to show what prevents them from being effective.

The book provides strategies and resources to enable schools to audit TAs, building a detailed picture of their daily activities, interactions with pupils and teachers as well as the quality of TA to pupil communication.

Most importantly, it suggests a way forward, evidencing the fact that quality



time with teachers, a robust system of performance management and review, and opportunities for training TAs in areas such as questioning, are all vital to improving impact and ensuring positive outcomes for all.

The book is well laid out and clearly written: perfect for busy teachers. If you are struggling to raise the profile of your TAs in school or need evidence to prove to your senior leadership team that this is an important area of focus in whole-school planning, I recommend you purchase a copy immediately.

Maxine Houghton is the Senco of the Olympus Academy Trust, South Gloucestershire

How to bring out the ‘super hero’ in children

Healthy Mindsets for Super Kids: A Resilience Programme for Children Aged 7-14

By Stephanie Azir

Published by Jessica Kingsley

ISBN 9781849053150

£18.99

Reviewed by Helen Curran

This book begins with a meteor of positive energy landing on Earth with the power to change a person into the ‘super hero’ opposite of what they were before.

It makes a dramatic introduction to an engaging comic strip for children aged seven to 14. However, the punchy cartoons and text are not just there to tell a story – they are the vehicle for



delivering a programme developed in response to an identified need for increasing resilience in children.

The book is a first for Stephanie Azir and her illustrator husband Sid. Mrs Azir is an Australia-based clinical social worker who has centred her career on developing resilience skills in children, particularly those with symptoms of anxiety, depression and communication issues.

The term 'resilience' is often used in education with regard to a child's view of themselves as a learner when faced with challenging tasks. However, the author sets out to widen the context and consider the child more holistically.

Her intention is to provide children with the skills and emotional tools to handle life events.

How so? The programme is divided into 10 modules, each of which focuses on a life skill. These include self-esteem, communication skills and dealing with

“A varied and unique resource for developing resilience”

anger, grief and loss.

It is designed to be flexible so modules can be covered in any order, although the central story line is cumulative, so this needs to be considered.

Each module consists of a lesson, worksheets, interactive exercises and a hands-on activity, and takes between one and three hours.

Practical strategies to develop independence are taught throughout. As is the case with many interventions, regularity is advised – in this case, at least weekly. Certainly this would help keep the momentum going in what is a detailed central narrative.

If you are a professional working in a school looking for an imaginative programme to engage children and develop their resilience, this may be the tool for you. The 'super hero' nature of the story is likely to appeal more to boys, although it is clear that the author has tried to keep a gender balance.

The book is clearly laid out and easy to navigate. The introduction states that you can 'dip in', but I advise a comprehensive read to fully appreciate how each module sits within the programme.

All in all, it provides a varied and unique resource for developing resilience in children, one that I am sure will appeal to children and the adults working with them.

Helen Curran is a former Senco and LA SEN advisor. She is currently preparing her PhD whilst working independently as a SEN/dyslexia consultant for Sense Education in the South West

Literacy notes

Sound Before Symbol: Developing Literacy Through Music

By Maria Kay

Published by Sage Publications

ISBN 9781446252475

£22.99

Reviewed by Jennifer FitzGerald

I settled down to read this book early one evening before bed. It is well laid out, with the chapters clearly explained and it seemed like an interesting evening's pursuit. Written for anyone who works or lives with children from birth to age eight, it investigates the relationship between music and literacy, and identifies some tips and activities to help a budding musician bring song into literacy sessions.

Ms Kay expresses her opinions well and makes sure that the material covers a range of ages, skills and approaches to literacy. She offers a lot of references for further reading, as well as evidential links, books and helpful websites.

All tips and activities are clearly identifiable thanks to the clear layout, and these help to break up the text. She also includes a helpful section explaining how to use the book and understand the symbols she uses.

Unfortunately I found it hard to

“Most suitable for someone with a great interest in the link between music and literacy”

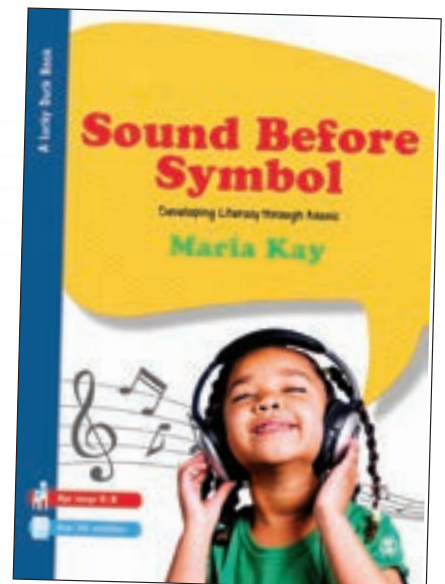
get drawn in, finding some of the activities she suggests either very basic or uninspiring. Her points are well researched and, though informative, become bogged down by an over abundance of evidence at times. The deeper I got into the book, the more I thought that it would be of more interest to someone researching the link between a musical education and literacy rather than to a classroom practitioner.

However, the final chapter was most relevant to me. This focuses on learning goals, classroom specific advice, using music in class or group situations and

includes advice for working with children with additional needs. Helpfully, it also provides a basic overview of an example music session.

The book would be most suitable for someone with a great interest in the link between music and literacy and how this can be used to support children's developing literacy, but it is not a light read. Be prepared for a wealth of evidence and learning from these 90 pages.

Jennifer FitzGerald, a former EYFS/KS1 mainstream teacher, is currently a SEN teacher for KS1 children



Look who's talking

Speech and language advisors and teachers talk about how they use ICT to give children without a voice the power to communicate

Communication aids – Ruth McMorran

When children and young people have little or no clear speech, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) allows them to communicate in many different ways. There are two main types of AAC: aided and unaided.

Unaided methods include facial expression, body language, gesture and signing. While you always have your 'tools' with you (hands/face), not everyone will understand you.

Aided communication falls into two categories: low tech and high tech. Low-tech methods often use pictures and symbols, need no power and can be carried around by the child. Examples include laminated symbols or objects on a key ring, an E-Tran frame (a Perspex sheet with symbols, words or letters around the border and the support worker watches where the student's eyes gaze), communications books, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS from Pyramid Educational Consultants) and Picture Communication System (PCS from DynaVox).

No matter what long-term solution I propose, it is essential that children have access to a low-tech solution. Partly this is a good back up. In addition, observing a child using their low-tech aid during an assessment allows me to establish their levels of fine motor skills and ability to navigate and categorise their symbols.

When using high-tech aids, most of the children and young people I support use direct access (i.e. they select a message by touching the screen with their finger). Some pupils with additional physical disabilities may require other strategies to access high-tech solutions such as eye gaze technology (see *Special Children* 214).

High-tech systems

High-tech systems are powered, and range from single recorded message output devices to systems that take symbol or text input to produce speech. Some of the lower-priced resources include PENpals, Smooth Talker, SuperTalker and Proxtalker.

A PENpal allows you to save up to 60 minutes on a recordable label and play it back. Battery-powered with 4GB



The SuperTalker can be set up in one, two, four or eight grid formats as the child's abilities grow

of memory, the PENpal has a lanyard attachment so it can be easily carried around, and a silicon cover so it is tough enough to withstand being dropped. When the child touches a label with PENpal, it plays back the recording assigned to that label. (See *Tried and tested* in *Special Children* 213.) £55+VAT; 400 labels: £9.95+VAT from Mantra Lingua.

“It is essential that children have access to a low-tech solution”

Smooth Talker is a single switch device that you use to record phrases. This allows children to join in lessons at the press of a button with, say, 'Here, Miss' at registration. Messages can be up to two minutes and the device has five modes including one for offering choices, such as 'Yes' or 'No', 'Water' or 'Juice'. (See product reviews in *Special Children* 204.) £109+VAT from Inclusive Technology.

The SuperTalker has 16 minutes' recording time and can be used as a single message communicator, although it also allows up to eight messages, words or phrases at a time as children learn to build complex sentences. Input and output jacks turn the device into a switch for toys or appliances such as a television. £250+VAT from Inclusive Technology.

The Proxtalker also gives children a voice to go with the symbols. It has tags with symbols – say a teddy bear – which the child presses against a button and the machine says the word or phrase

associated with that picture (up to eight seconds per tag). It has five placements for tags, allowing children to build up a sentence. Proxtalkers (2kg) are robust and come in a bag with a shoulder strap so children can carry it around. (See the product reviews in *Special Children* 204.) £1,695+VAT from Logan Technologies. Meanwhile Logan Technologies has brought out a free app (Apple store) to make it easier to create labels for the tags.

Hardware using grids

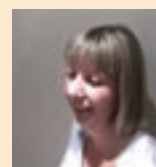
I often recommend high-tech dynamic display communication aids. With these devices, school staff no longer have to spend hours making up symbols, cutting them out, laminating them and finally velcroing them on a board in pupils' communication books or PECS books. On the other hand, they do have to create electronic grids with symbols or words for children to use on their devices.

The Grid 2 is an example of a communication software package which allows you to create grids of words or symbols on the device itself, or on a computer while the pupil is using their communication aid. The Grid 2 can be used with a range of devices such as the Motion Tablet CL900, the SB10 and the Mobi 2. £360+VAT from Smartbox AT.

Other devices, including the Papoo Touch as well as the iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch, run Grid Player, a free app from the Apple store. If the user has a licence for The Grid 2, grids can be made up on a computer and then synced to the mobile device.

If you want pure Apple, Proloquo2Go is one of many programs that allows you to adapt grids on the iPad itself. £125+VAT from AssistiveWare.

My colleagues in Surrey and Kent take up the story overleaf.



Ruth McMorran, specialist advisory teacher for ICT and AAC with Physical and Sensory Support, Surrey County Council and a Trustee of Communication Matters

A dedicated handheld communication aid – Sara B.

The children in my class are on the autistic spectrum. Two of the boys use a Papoo Touch to give them a voice. £1,950+VAT inc The Grid 2 and Grid Player from Smartbox AT.

About the size of a Nintendo DS console, Papoo Touches have Acapella voices, which sound realistic. The basic layout provided a good starting point for me to develop once I understood what the boys were capable of – I spent a week observing them before customising each device. Grids I've set up on The Grid 2 and then synched across include At Home and At School, and the boys scroll through these to find the symbols they need to build up a sentence, then press the button to play it aloud. There is an option to use words later on. The downside of the Papoo Touch is that the phrase comes up in words rather than symbols in the message bar at the top.

Being very IT oriented, one lad took to it quickly. He loves it and uses it in every lesson. His vocabulary is growing fast;



The beauty of the Papoo Touch is that it is so small

he's only been speaking for two years, but now that he is modelling speech by himself – sentences and how to say them – he's motivated to learn new words, which he can verbalise with his device.

The other boy's understanding is not as advanced but he, too, is learning his

way around his device. He has a sentence starter so he can press 'I see' and then the object he sees. While the volume is good, he is hampered by a profound hearing loss, so when he clicks on a symbol twice and then presses 'speak', he isn't able to hear that he's put, 'I want I want a biscuit a biscuit.'

The Papoo Touch is more versatile and inviting than the boys' old PECS books. Although they could use these competently, they weren't as motivated by them. They were also limited by the number of symbols they could store – at eight or nine pages of symbols, their PECS books were full. They now have four times the number of symbols in a more accessible format.

My only niggle is that I would have liked more guidance initially on how to use the device – I spent a lot of time working it out at home.

Sara B., class teacher for years 4 and 5 at a school for children with complex needs aged two to 19, Guildford

A dedicated speech generating tablet – Nina Booker

I've been helping Ursula learn her way around the Motion CL900, an A4 Windows 7 tablet. £2,300+VAT from Smartbox AT.

We use it with The Grid 2 and Ingfield Dynamic Vocabularies, a collection of four topic-based grid sets that have all the elements of a sentence on one page, making it quick and easy to create complete sentences. £220+VAT from Smartbox AT.

Ursula travels to school on the bus and initially we worried about her taking expensive equipment on it, but the CL900 has a solid-state memory with no moving parts, so it is pretty rugged.

While she can speak, she is generally unintelligible so we wanted to find a way for her to show us how much she knew; on a recent dinosaur project, she knew all the answers and was pointing to the visuals.

“We wanted to find a way for her to show us how much she knew”

This is the first time our school has used AAC. I have had some training but it has still been a steep learning curve for us all. For her part, Ursula needs time to learn to navigate her way around her grids. She tends to press random things and then press 'speak', which can be quite off-putting for other children. Ingfield Dynamic Vocabularies give her a sentence starter, and she is getting used to checking for sense before she presses 'speak'.

She spends her mornings in the school's Ocean Centre for children in years 3

to 6 with learning difficulties, and her afternoons in the mainstream class. I liaise with her teacher to input the main vocabulary for these lessons and then show her where to find things. It took me all Sunday afternoon to prepare the symbols for another dinosaur session. We can add things ad hoc but usually we make notes through the week and update her grids over the weekend ready for the next week.

Ursula loves her tablet and her confidence has grown as a result of using it. Now, instead of hanging around watching me prepare for lessons in the morning, she'll get her tablet out and look at some of the things she did the previous day in class.

Nina Booker, teacher and Ocean Centre manager at Furze field Primary School, Merstham, Surrey

Using an iPad – Rosy Watson

Toby vocalises but is unable to use speech to communicate, so he uses an iPad with Grid Player from Smartbox AT. This allows him to communicate effectively without having to use signing or PECS.

Toby mainly uses symbols, but we are

gradually substituting these for words as he learns to read. He found his PECS book cumbersome and slow but carries his iPad everywhere – it makes communication so easy in comparison. He is becoming adept at flicking between grids to find the right word. We took his iPad out on a visit to

the local market and he used it to ask the stallholder how much bananas were. This would have been possible with his PECS book, but so much fiddlier. It's *his* voice, and it's amazing how much difference it makes to him.

Although he can't say the words aloud

► Continued on page 50

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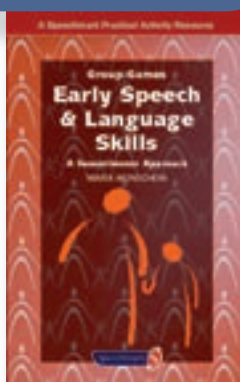


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Toby has become very adept at flicking through his grids to find the right word

when he reads, I've uploaded vocabulary from his books and he matches up words. I've also made some self-evaluation grids to use with him at the end of each session to allow him to demonstrate his understanding of what he's just read.

Every week he spends an afternoon at the local primary school and he's learning to use his iPad to show the teachers what he'd like to play with. He needs a lot of prompting to communicate with other children in the school, but they're all fascinated by his iPad, which is helping to break down barriers.

Half a dozen other children use iPads in our school. One pupil uses his with eye

gaze technology. Toby has a grid with 20 cells; other children may have just two – we can make the grids as complicated as we like to keep extending pupils. Meanwhile, Toby's parents really enjoy making new grids for use at home.



Rosy Watson, class teacher, Brooklands School for children from nursery to year 6 with PMLD and SLD, Reigate

Choosing a mobile device – Beth Lowe

Hi-tech AAC gives children an independent voice without needing an adult to interpret what they say or using silent symbols. I teach children to use a wide range of this technology, including mobile devices.

The iPad has the cool factor. However, some students with poor fine motor skills or impaired vision are better off with a bigger device such as the CL900. This has better quality voices and better amplification, so you get more volume, which is helpful in a classroom. On the other hand, iPads are lighter and cheaper.

Although The Grid 2 (for Windows-based devices like the CL900) is more expensive than Apple's Proloquo2Go, it is better if this is the student's primary means of communication. However, if students have some speech, Proloquo2Go is good at

giving context. For example, one pupil uses it to give key words so that listeners can piece together what she says more easily.

“Hi-tech AAC gives children an independent voice”

Being all in one, the iPad is more accessible for photos, films and music, which can make it less powerful as a communication aid. While we want independent students who can amuse themselves, because they have everything on one device, they don't have to ask for things and so it takes the focus off communication. And sometimes it is hard to explain that it is not always appropriate

to play music or games in lessons.

The Mobi 2 is used in the same way as the Papoo Touch and the CL900, but is thinner and lighter. £4,400+VAT, from Techcess. The SB10 is another Windows tablet. Lighter than the iPad but similar in size, it comes with a Bluetooth speaker, so the sound quality is excellent – beneficial in a classroom or if you are out in the community. £1,450 with The Grid 2 from Smartbox AT.

Ultimately, a key choice is down to what software the pupil wants to use. One student with an SB10 used to have an iPad but it wasn't possible to edit or add vocabulary on the fly (it has to be synced), which was important for him.

Beth Lowe, a speech and language therapist, works in special schools in south west Surrey

A picture-based communication program – Chris Beacall, Alan Holland, Julie Pendleton, Gill Lester

45 places in our Liverpool primary school are 'enhanced' for children with physical difficulties. Three of these children have been on the AAC journey and all now use products from DynaVox, available from Toby Churchill – the Vmax+ (£4,995+VAT), the M3 (£1,995+VAT) and the Maestro (£5,994+VAT).

Ultimately, the difference these communication aids make depends on whether they are mounted on the children's wheelchairs where they can be adjusted to an angle that suits them. The more access children have to their devices, the more confident they become

“Children are starting to reach their full potential”

using them. Our difficulty is getting the equipment mounted – Children's Services have been working with us for two years to resolve this. One child's parents invested in a mounting arm, which made a huge difference. The other two children rely on adults to get the device out for them and are therefore less proficient.

We chose the DynaVox products because we like a picture-based communication program.

The aids come with InterAACt page sets, a language framework, already loaded. We can use these or customise pages as required. Crucially, DynaVox offers free training to the school, and to parents at home. We then support and train the children, demonstrating hand over hand.

The devices are well designed and resistant to knocks. Because they run on Windows 7, the children can access compatible software: they can compose and print documents, listen to music,

access the internet, send emails and upload photographs. Basically they are good machines to use for both user



The boys compete to be first to find words on their grids

and facilitator.

However, this technology is expensive so it can be hard to get funding. We are lucky in Liverpool: a partnership, which has developed between Children's Services and the Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group, will fund an AAC equipment budget as a recommended outcome from the Children and Families Bill.

We have problems with insurance – many parents don't have home insurance so the equipment isn't covered at home. The battery life isn't fantastic, the weight of the devices makes them hard to mount, and visibility in the sunshine is poor – the screen shades provided are not very effective.

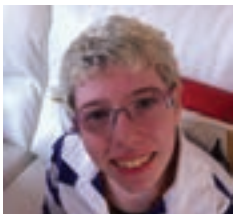
The upside is that the children can take part in lessons and are starting to reach their full potential.

Their lives are also enriched. One child is into football. Although his equipment is not mounted, he can now ask for a packet of crisps or a bottle of Coke, and join in the boos or the shouts when there's a goal. That's the sort of thing that matters.



L-R: Julie Pendleton, Chris Beacall, Gill Lester and Alan Holland from Springwood Heath Primary School, Liverpool

A text-based communication aid – an interview with Beth Moulam



Beth Moulam is 19 and recently left Valence School, a special school in Kent.

What were you studying? I have done a level 3 ASDAN award of Personal Effectiveness and an AS level in geography. I have eight GCSEs.

Why do you need a communication device? I have cerebral palsy and dysarthria, which is a muscle weakness around the mouth that makes it hard to form words.

What other solutions have you tried? Over the years I have had five devices. Three were symbol-based and two were text-based, including the LightWriter SL40, which I use now. (£3,200 from Toby Churchill.)

What made you choose a LightWriter? It has enabled me to be independent as the functions include a phone and a notebook for when I do presentations. I have been presenting to large and small groups since I was 12 about using a communication aid and what this has meant for me personally and academically.

The LightWriter looks like a QWERTY keyboard. But communication solutions are not just about high-tech communication aids. I use my natural speech (not easy for people to

understand), gestures, facial expressions, eye pointing and any props to hand.

When did you get the LightWriter? I got my first one at 10 but this model at 14. At 10, there were some concerns – my spelling was a bit 'wobbly', but actually it has really improved my spelling over the years. I have to input any new word I want to use, so I learn it as I go along.

Why is it good? I like the natural prediction as it offers me the words I use most frequently. This speeds me up to 10 to 15 words a minute.

I like the voice better than the ones I had before as it's British (I hated sounding like an American). I love the fact that I can pre-programme speeches for my presentations.

How easy is it to use? For me it's easy as I can input direct. I use my finger with a raised keyboard to help me hit the right keys.

What has it enabled you to do that you couldn't before? Talk to anyone about anything at any time.

When I speak, people will stop and listen as my voice can be commanding when it's quiet. Although sometimes too commanding if I want a quiet conversation or to whisper.

How has it helped you at school? I can contribute to group discussions, answer questions and express my opinions. It has helped me access the curriculum and be successful.

What difference does it make to your life? I can just get on with my life as I know I can make myself understood. I can share my feelings, take part in a huge range of activities and make presentations.

What are your plans for the future? I have just started an extended BA (Hons) degree in Social Policy and hope in four years' time to work for a charity or other organisation where I can advocate, campaign and lobby for people with disabilities, especially those with communication impairments.

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Music with intent

Sounds of Intent gives pupils with SEND a framework to develop their musical abilities. **Victoria Hubbard** explains

A little boy arrived in our nursery a year ago able to produce only a few sounds. Gradually, after sessions with his teaching assistant (TA), he began to vocalise. Now he is beginning to use elements of formal communication. Music, and more specifically Sounds of Intent, has helped to make this possible.

Sounds of Intent is a free, online assessment tool and resource that enables practitioners to map musical development in pupils with special education needs and disabilities, including those who may have little or no verbal communication.

As a result of using it, we have come to realise that many of our pupils are musically gifted. One has perfect pitch and is now having piano lessons at home with a teacher who specialises in teaching music by ear.

A curriculum framework

Sounds of Intent was inspired by the RNIB's PROMISE Report (Provision of Music in Special Education, 2001 – bit.ly/sc215-07), which found that there was no national, research-based curriculum framework to support musical development in pupils with SEND. It enables practitioners to understand and promote all stages of musical development in pupils, from those who may initially show no reaction to sound, to naturally talented musicians with the potential to become accomplished performers.

The framework has three domains:

- reactive – how pupils react to sound and music
- proactive – how pupils produce sounds and music
- interactive – how pupils begin to relate to others through sound and music.

Each domain has six levels, which are further broken down into four elements, giving practitioners 72 stages of musical engagement which can be used to assess, set targets, plan sessions and monitor progress. We've found that, although some pupils may not be showing any



TAs Clare and Karen support pupils Liam Tofton and Logan Desforges-Sharp looking for reactive and interactive responses to singing and percussion during a session on the resonance boards

changes within the P levels, they are in fact making musical progress, which we can demonstrate using the resource.

Easy to use

A mix of TAs and teachers deliver Sounds of Intent in our school. With only a little initial training, even those who initially lacked confidence in music have been able to use it successfully.

One convert is a lady who works in our specialist communication and interaction base. She was apprehensive at first but is now thrilled to see the progress her pupils are making. In particular, she has found that the early stages of musical thinking link naturally to her Intensive Interaction sessions (see *Special Children* 211).

One of the pupils she supports was working below P3ii but quickly progressed from simply responding to sounds to demonstrating preferences for certain instruments; then from indicating which ones he wanted her to play to copying short rhythms and motifs. A year later, he started to lead their sessions; it is exciting to watch the musical conversation developing between them.

She finds Sounds of Intent makes planning straightforward: she identifies the target she wants for a pupil and clicks on that area of the framework. The system

then takes her to a detailed page of strategies, resources, and supporting case studies and videos.

Music doesn't discriminate

The crucial thing to understand is that, because of the way music is processed in the brain, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can be as musical as their mainstream peers, even if they have difficulties with cognition.

While the resource was designed for musical development, its effects impact on other areas of the curriculum. Teachers often come up to me and

say, 'You'll never guess what so-and-so has done in literacy.' We've also noticed improvements in concentration. Some pupils with autism who normally concentrate for only 20 seconds really get into music and we've had instances of pupils staying focused for 15 minutes at a time because they've found something they can relate to and enjoy.

Music changes lives and I see its influence every day in our school.

Victoria Hubbard is a Year 1 teacher and head of maths and music at St Luke's Primary School, Scunthorpe. One day a week she is seconded to the music education charity Soundabout, which is leading the dissemination of Sounds of Intent across the UK

Find out more

Sounds of Intent: <http://soundsofintent.org>
Soundabout offers one-day free training courses to schools in delivering Sounds of Intent. victoriahubbard@soundabout.org.uk

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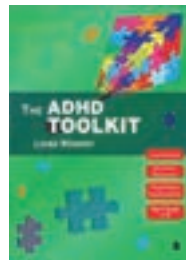
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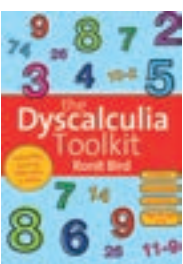
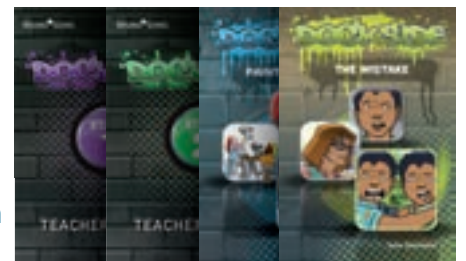
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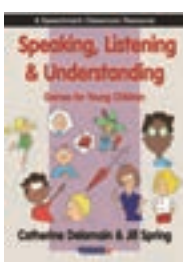
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